

AN INITIATIVE BY LUKE
POLLARD MP



PLYMOUTH WHITE PAPERS

ISSUE 4: APRIL 2022:
COMMUNITY

DESIGNED TO CHALLENGE, REFLECT AND INSPIRE

The Plymouth White Papers are an initiative by Luke Pollard MP. The hope is that each set of White Papers will contribute to the energy, direction and passion around Plymouth, and also allow us to reflect the difficulties our city has endured in the past twelve months.

These submissions have been written by people across Plymouth. They have been free to voice their own opinions and these are their own words. The white papers are designed to be political and challenge established thinking, but they're not designed to be party political.

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INTRODUCTION

LUKE POLLARD, MP FOR PLYMOUTH SUTTON AND DEVONPORT



"Like a garden, communities need growing, managing and watering. So, this White Paper is not only a celebration of our communities, but also a tribute to those who put in the time and effort to maintain them."

Community matters to me. We each define it, and our place within it, differently. But no matter what the word means to you, one thing is clear: community is the blood that pumps through us. It's a shoulder to lean on during the hard times, and the people who make the good times better.

In recent times, Plymouth has needed community more than ever. It's just over two years since we found ourselves in the first Covid-19 lockdown and, since then, our communities have grown stronger and stronger. We came together to help each other during the pandemic – from dropping off food parcels for people in isolation, to supporting those who lost loved ones.

Where before, lots of people did not know their neighbours or those down the street, Whatsapp groups and mutual aid initiatives have now brought us together. Many now feel less alone, including elderly neighbours, those whose children live far away, and others who live on their own. Faith groups, sports teams, colleagues, and countless others have also risen to the challenge of supporting one another.

And that same community support and solidarity was shown again after the Keyham shootings and the murder of Bobbi-Anne McLeod. When we have felt hurt or loneliness, setback or grief, confronting those pains is easier with others. When we look at how we got here, we recognise it was through the

sacrifices and efforts of people working together.

Community matters more to my politics than ever. Our communities are there every time we step outside our door or turn on our laptop. Communities, both digital and in-person, are part of who we are - but we don't always stop and reflect on those connections and the value of them.

These support networks are often built on the firm foundations of community buildings: youth centres, churches, other faith buildings, libraries, leisure centres, post offices, pubs and parks.

Much of this civic infrastructure has been eroded after twelve years of austerity but, despite the challenges we face, Plymouth is still marked by community. People make community and community makes our city great.

This year's Plymouth White Papers look afresh at our notions of community. We have a fantastic, inspiring set of contributors who each tell us what community means to them. They look at the bonds that bring Plymouth together, the heritage and history that we share, and how we can connect and enjoy collectively.

Like a garden, communities need growing, managing and watering. So, this White Paper is not only a celebration of our communities, but also a tribute to those who put in the time and effort to maintain them.

Plymouth has faced a tough few years but I am proud of the way we have come together and renewed many of the bonds that had grown more brittle. Our challenge is to come together more, reaching out to those places and individuals where community does not reach as easily.

I hope this year's White Papers make for an interesting and thoughtful read, and that you are encouraged to explore more of what our city has to offer. Because it is community that allows us, as individuals and a city, to grow.

Luke Pollard is the Labour and Co-operative Member of Parliament for Plymouth Sutton and Devonport. Luke lives in Plymouth, supports Plymouth Argyle and is a keen wild swimmer. He also tweets a lot at @LukePollard

COMMUNITY STRENGTH AFTER THE KEYHAM TRAGEDY

KEV SPROSTON,
CHAIR, KEYHAM COMMUNITY WATCH



"The words 'Plymouth Together' have been a symbolic statement, showing that our city is a tightknit personal community despite its size."

Keyham has been my home for over seventeen years. I love the place, the people, the businesses, the community. I have always been keen to speak highly of this area because Keyham is home to some of the most genuine and friendly people you could wish to know.

That is why it is so hard to digest the tragedy that unfolded here on 12th August 2021. We lost five well-known and well-loved members of our community that day – Maxine Davison, Stephen Washington, Kate Shepherd, as well as Lee Martyn and his three-year-old daughter, Sophie Martyn. Others were injured, and hundreds of people witnessed what happened.

Such was the disbelief and shock that everyone can remember exactly where they were on that day. It will be a memory that will never fade. Keyham has a relatively low crime rate and rarely has the need for a high police presence. So, it was a day no one was ready to even begin to make sense of. If it could happen in Keyham, it could happen literally anywhere in the UK. These words seem easy to understand but it becomes very different when it is on your doorstep or you have friends involved.

Many people were scared in the aftermath of what happened. Not in the sense they thought they would be attacked or hurt, but the fear for a lot of the community was more a sad, thoughtful fear. It has been almost like a disappointment or depression as the world seemed a little darker from that day. People felt more fearful about the world in general, not just in the area on our doorstep. The feeling for many was complex: some felt angry, some confused, some numb, but one thing the whole community felt was grief and sadness.

Unlike the movies, there was no superhero to make things better. However, we had something better – a community ready to come together to help and assist one another. Through our resolve, we responded to fear and grief with strength and love. This was seen when we held a vigil that was attended by hundreds. It was seen when local organisations opened their doors the next day and offered help. It was seen by hundreds of volunteers doing whatever they could to help out in the weeks following. This is what defines community.

Over and over, I saw examples of this. I watched strangers hug each other, and young ones making new friends through lighting candles together. Personally, I take heart and strength from seeing such compassion, friendship and a community united in moving forward and caring for each other. It proved that fear will never succeed, especially not in Keyham and Ford.

"Through our resolve, we responded to fear and grief with strength and love... Our communities have stood up together. Without forgetting what has happened, or those who we lost, we are moving forward."

The dictionary defines community as "a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common". Even though the dictionary defines it like this, I think it fails to embrace the magnitude of what community really is. I would struggle to define it myself as I don't hold the linguistic skillset to explain what I believe is community. Because community to me is feelings – of soul, understanding and compassion. It is what makes you feel safe and relaxed when you walk around.

Our communities have stood up together. Without forgetting what has happened, or those who we lost, we are moving forward. As such there

are great events and community gatherings being planned. The passion from people to make positive change from this has been huge, and I can personally say that I have met so many new people and community leaders that I now call friends because of this.

Keyham has received messages of sympathy, love and warmth from people all across the world, and we appreciate each and every one. But even more significantly, Plymouth as a city has been like our big brother. Communities in other Plymouth neighbourhoods have stood shoulder to shoulder with us, insistent on showing their support. The words 'Plymouth Together' have been a symbolic statement, showing that our city is a tightknit personal community despite its size. I truly believe that the mindset and attitude of the people of Plymouth is to look out and care for each other, more so than any other city I've been to.

"Plymouth as a city has been like our big brother. Communities in other Plymouth neighbourhoods have stood shoulder to shoulder with us"

It would be remiss of me not to thank the emergency services, as well as Plymouth City Council, our MP, local councillors, and all the organisations that have stepped in to support our area. The Plymouth Together Fund has raised thousands of pounds as well as helping to signpost people to care and wellbeing support.

On top of this, we have secured £1.8 million of state funding to go toward social workers, psychologists, better home security and extra policing. Help for our community has come from every level and everyone has put their heart and soul into helping the area move forward.

Nothing is more powerful than a community coming together as one. Despite the circumstances that Plymouth has faced, we have continued to show ourselves as a united city. Like so many others, I am proud to be playing a small part in helping Keyham and Ford to heal and grow. I have no doubt that this community will continue to thrive and become better than it ever was.

Kev Sproston is chair of Keyham Neighbourhood Watch. Also a Royal Navy veteran and award-winning community advocate, he is best known for his volunteer work in the local area,

TRADE UNIONS: MAKING WORK BETTER IN PLYMOUTH

**MATT ROBERTS,
REGIONAL TRADE UNION ORGANISER**



"Members often say that unions are big families. Their mission and values are as important now as a hundred years ago."

Trade unions matter. Tens of thousands of twenty-first century Plymothians continue to shrug off the idea that trade unions are something of a different age and that solidarity is dead.

Whilst there are fewer trade union members in today's Plymouth, and today's Britain, than amongst previous generations, it is far too simplistic to suggest this reflects a rejection of, or irrelevance of, or fault with, the principles and values behind the largest working people's movement in the world.

The world of work has changed and it's probably inevitable that collectivism has suffered accordingly. In past generations, many more working-class people worked in very large workplaces including in centralised or nationalised industries. Workers are now far more dispersed, in typically much smaller and fragmented workplaces and industries. In the 1970s and 1980s, many people came to a conclusion that trade union leaders, with their mass memberships, perhaps wielded too much power, and the 'culture wars' of those years led to much maligning in the media of the trade union movement.

However, whilst there was an obvious social dysfunction to our country during those times, many working people enjoyed a good standard of living with improving housing; access to consumer goods; increased wealth; home ownership for the masses at a young age; relative good pay that often required only one partner in the home to work full-time; cheap transportation; good pensions that enabled a prosperous and often early retirement; and growing opportunities for their children and family life.

Looking at the prospects of today's Millennials and Generation Z, the contrast is stark. They are the first generations in decades to be poorer than their parents, and they face the prospect of living with those parents until their thirties, or forking out extortionate rents where this is not an option. As well as this, they must tolerate low paid and insecure work, often with unsocial hours and poor conditions; reduced employment rights; costly social and family life; often rubbish pensions; a mental health crisis; the list could go on.

"Without any fanfare, unions in Plymouth carry out a mission to make work better every day. Representation for individuals in tricky situations, fighting for decent pay and conditions, campaigning for equality and inclusion."

With the passage of time since the aforementioned culture wars of decades past, and the changing conditions of workers in today's Plymouth (typically not for the better), many people have now long forgotten any negative preconceptions of trade unions. This is especially true among younger generations.

This was illustrated by one of the proudest moments of the GMB Union in Plymouth in recent years. A group of Plymouth young people – mostly women, including teenagers and migrant workers – working as waiters in well-known restaurants, found that money was being taken from their pay for assumed tips and gratuities they weren't actually receiving. Where could they turn? Legal advice seemed costly and inaccessible.

They didn't need expensive lawyers; they needed practical help with a campaign to fight for fairness and their rights. They could go to Citizen's Advice, but again this could not deliver a practical presence in the workplace, the place where the problem was occurring. Luckily, one of the young people had heard of a trade union and approached GMB Union.

The workers were then organised together into a collective through signing-up as members. They presented a united and collective grievance, with in-person representation in the hearings from union officials. The final outcome, after many meetings, was a complete change to the company policy, a victory for people power, and tens of thousands of pounds worth of settlements being paid out to these low-paid workers for the past injustices. Money that in some cases changed their lives. Not bad when most of them had never heard about a trade union before.

"Tens of thousands of Plymothians continue to shrug off the idea that trade unions are something of a different age."

Research from the GMB Union shows that there's a simple reason why most people haven't joined a union – it's that they have never been asked if they want to by anyone at work. This reinforces the point that the reason for union membership figures being lower is the dispersal of the traditional large workplaces.

In the Plymouth of the past, the two main routes for the majority of school leavers were the Naval Dockyard and the Corporation (now Plymouth City Council). Even though these two employers remain, the trend is still clear – whilst there was one employer at the Dockyard, there are now many including Babcock, the Ministry of Defence, Kaefer, Morson, Serco, ISS and others. And, within what was the Council there are many employers too: the retained core Council, Plymouth Community Homes, Plymouth Citybus, Delt Shared Services, many Academy Schools Trusts, and others. Unions have adapted by welcoming thousands into the fold of membership.

So, without any fanfare, unions in Plymouth carry out a mission to make work better every day. Representation for individuals in tricky situations, fighting for decent pay and conditions, campaigning for equality and inclusion. GMB Union have been at the forefront of campaigning for

workplace support for those suffering domestic abuse including paid leave to escape harmful domestic situations. We have also been helping to make work better for neurodiverse workers by challenging employers to raise standards and implement positive policies to improve inclusion.

The Plymothians who need unions most of all are those who need the redressing of the balance of power that unions have always offered. Plymothians who may not have had the best opportunities or riches that life can offer. People who just want to make a good living, an honest day's pay for an honest day's work.

Many Plymothians will also be unaware that some trade unions have a charitable arm that enables good work in our communities. The Alex Ferry Foundation, which is underpinned by four trade unions: GMB Union, Unite the Union, Prospect, and the Community Union, was generated from a levy originally paid by workers in shipbuilding and engineering, including tens of thousands of Plymothians. This trade union Foundation has supported diverse projects ranging from painting the subways in Plympton with beautiful murals, to supporting people with hearing loss based in Mannamead, to fighting food poverty in young families in Whitleigh, to reopening community facilities in Devonport, to cancer support, to funding mental health support in the city centre, and many others. All of this from the solidarity, community and people power that is core to trade union values.

Trade unions must adapt continuously to a changing world but, at their centre, their mission and values are as important now as they were a hundred years ago. So, join a trade union in your workplace and if there isn't one, join a union yourself and start one. Members often say that unions like GMB Union are big families, so consider being part of our collective family in good times and in bad. Where unions build collective campaigns on the issues that matter to members, we will win.

Matt Roberts is a regional official with the GMB Union based in Plymouth, and the Secretary of the South West Confederation of Shipbuilding & Engineering Unions and the Joint-Secretary of the South West Provincial Council. He is also a season-ticket holder at Plymouth Argyle FC.

MAKING WAVES IN BRITAIN'S OCEAN CITY

TORS FROUD, MAKING WAVES PLYMOUTH



"It is the community spirit of sea swimming which is taking many newcomers by storm"

We are blessed in Plymouth with a natural amphitheatre for the sea, but many people are reluctant to engage with the water. Are there sharks in there? Do I have to wear a wetsuit? How cold is it? Where is it safe?

We are Britain's Ocean City, yet 54% of Plymouth children are unable to swim; the government provide free swimming lessons through Key Stage 2 National Curriculum however the logistics of being able to enlist with this free provision means that a lot of children go without this opportunity. Meanwhile, data suggests that around one in three adults in England cannot swim.

The Making Waves Together Project aims to change this. We were established in July 2018 when we gained Sport England funding for a two and a half year pilot project. Working inclusively with families in two of the most socio-economically underfunded postcodes in Plymouth, PL1 and PL2, we set about helping local communities to engage with the sea.

One of the National Marine Park objectives is to promote and encourage people to get in, on, under and near the sea but this needs to be done in an inclusive, safe manner. How? Sea swimming is an incredibly beneficial activity. We hear a lot about the Blue Mind: how the water can make you

happier, healthier, more connected and better at what you do. With regards to the calming affect that the visuals or tactility of the ocean can give people, an awareness of this blue mind allows the switch off to the digital world, focusing on the here and now.

These experiences can be heightened with the immersion and shared experience of water; it is the community spirit of sea swimming which is taking many newcomers by storm. The camaraderie on the beach – whether being respectful of personal belongings, being supportive as they gain entry to the water, or rewarding your swimming peers with a warm drink and bagel once dressed.

“Lockdown was a really lonely place for many people. Tors contacted me to say that Making Waves was starting adult sea swimming lessons once we were able to exercise as a group outdoors. I had never swum in the sea before. I was very nervous but the rest is history- our swimming group have become great friends. We’ve been in the sea every weekend since September 2020 and we are currently doing a national swimming challenge together.”.

Larrah Thompson, local resident

Cordelia Roberts, a local swimming personality, completed 365 swims in 365 days in 2021 (some of which had to be accomplished remotely due to Covid). When asked why she did this, she replied, “A great pal once said to me, you’re making time for yourself and just yourself every single day- something you wouldn’t have done before- and she is right. I did”. Yet through the power of social media this swimmer welcomed people along with her at every step of her journey. On the last day of the 365 challenge a crowd of supporters, some of which had never met before, bonded on the beach as they cheered and congratulated her personal achievement.

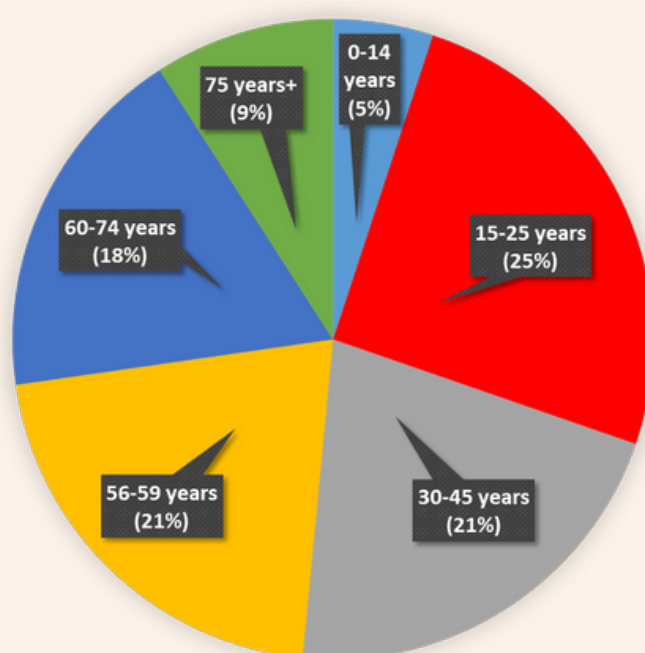
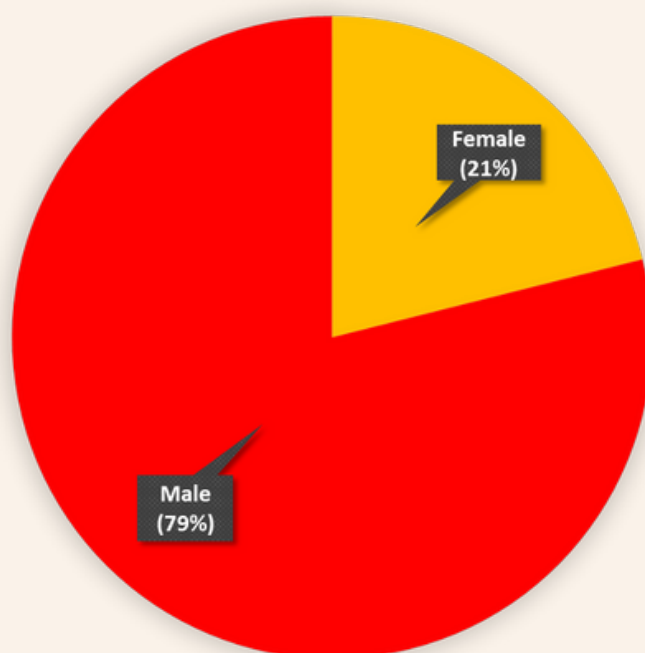
The RNLI and Plymouth City Council are promoting a buddy system within the sea-swimming community, focusing on water safety. During lockdown we have seen this buddy system grow exponentially with masses of people taking to sea for the first time to experience sea swimming. Yet we still have sea-swimming rescues by the RNLI. Many of these incidents involve a ill-prepared swimmer with limited experience.

Fortunately, most incidents result in the swimmer being safely brought back into shore, but there are some occurrences of more serious outcomes, including fatalities.

Ten percent of RNLI Plymouth Lifeboat launches in 2021 were for swimmers, an increase on previous years, with lone male swimmers making up the majority. The first was in February, where water temperatures are generally sub-10 degrees. There were no such launches between 14th June and 20th September, where the sea temperature ranged from 13 to 17 degrees in 2021.

For communities to succeed, they need to share attitudes or interests. At Making Waves Plymouth, we are promoting and encouraging the sea-swimming community as a sustainable, social and healthy activity but a focus must be that of respect for the water and an awareness of sea safety. Hosting free water-safety session in and near the water. Discussing shipping, tides, wind direction. Who to call in an emergency. Basic first aid including understanding cold water shock and hypothermia. How to 'Float to Live' and self-rescue. Once taught we hope the ripple effect of knowledge will take hold.

What more can we do to provide safe community sea-swimming? Plymouth City Council has requested the RNLI to conduct a beach assessment to investigate beach safety along selected locations on the foreshore. Wrist whistles may be handed out to hundreds of swimmers as a means of signalling for



assistance. Basic water safety training can only cement sea-swimming communities, giving knowledge can promote autonomy and signposting swimmers to communities in the correct locations.

We have five Bathing Areas in Plymouth Sound, a major commercial and naval port, during the months of May to September. These Bathing Areas are in Bovisand Bay, Crownhill Bay, Cawsand Bay, Firestone Bay and Tinside East. Communities understanding the legislation in place to protect them: 'In the interests of safety, all vessels and small craft are advised to avoid Bathing Areas altogether. If passage by craft, including personal watercraft, through a Bathing Area is essential, craft are not to exceed 4 knots and are to proceed with extreme caution giving way to swimmers in the water. (Queen's Harbour Master, 2016). Swimmers can report any incident to the QHM, ideally with photographic or video evidence so legal action may be taken.

Here are some top tips to stay safe when you're swimming:

- Never swim alone – always with a group or buddy, even if they are sat on the shore spotting you.
- Swim in a designated swim area – and check local signage.
- Check the tides, sea temperature and weather conditions
- Be prepared - bring warm, dry clothes, a fluorescent swim hat and/or float, and warm, sugary food & drink.
- Have a means of calling for help. In an emergency, ring 999 and ask for the Coastguard.

Making Waves Plymouth, now under the charitable trust umbrella of the Mount Batten Centre and its spin off project, Wave After Wave, is a water safety initiative focusing on Firestone Bay.

Tors Froud is Engagement and Inclusion Manager for the National Marine Park and manages Making Waves Plymouth. Also a geography teacher and a mum, she is passionate about making the sea accessible, safe and sustainable for all.

DENTISTRY IN PLYMOUTH: WHAT HAVE WE GOT TO SMILE ABOUT?

DR IAN MILLS,
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF PRIMARY CARE
DENTISTRY, PENINSULA DENTAL SCHOOL



**"Successive UK Governments
have failed to address the
underlying problems within
NHS dentistry, where need
and demand massively
outstrip capacity."**

In 2006 the University of Plymouth, in partnership with Exeter University and the NHS, was granted the opportunity to open the first new dental school in the UK for over forty years. The following year, the first cohort of 64 dental students commenced their studies in Plymouth as part of a four-year graduate programme. Over the last fifteen years there have been many changes and refinements in the curriculum which have led to Peninsula Dental School (PDS) developing an international reputation within dental education. While the dental school continues to innovate, other institutions are adopting the same methods and the 'Peninsula model' is becoming embedded in standard dental education.

An important factor in the successful Peninsula bid, was the potential impact which a new dental school could have on improving dental access in the region. Access to NHS dental services has been a major problem for many years, with the situation further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. We regularly hear reports of individuals in extreme pain unable to see a dentist;

frantic parents contacting their GP; and in extreme cases, desperate patients resorting to DIY dentistry. This is an appalling state of affairs, which has received widespread media coverage and questions in Parliament on the state of NHS dentistry.

Access to NHS Dentistry

The reasons for the lack of access to NHS dentistry are many, but the current dental contract is undoubtedly a key factor. The contract was introduced in 2006 in an attempt to improve access to NHS dentistry, but despite widespread criticism little has changed and patients continue to suffer. A 10% reduction in the number of dental graduates, the impact of Brexit on the availability of overseas dentists, an NHS contract that fails to promote prevention or equality of access, and the devastation caused by COVID-19 have all contributed to the current NHS dental crisis.

Improving oral health

Ironically, significant improvements in oral health have been reported within the UK over the last fifty years, with many fewer children requiring fillings, and adults retaining their teeth for longer. It may appear strange that despite a significant reduction in dental disease, our capacity to meet the oral health needs of the population has deteriorated. This is partly due to increased life expectancy with an ageing population retaining their teeth. Maintenance and repair of aging teeth often requires more complex dentistry, which can be complicated and takes more clinical time.

The expectations of patients have also changed with the expectation that we should all retain a functional and aesthetic dentition throughout our lifetime. This was not the case in previous decades, when many adults would be resigned to wearing complete dentures from a relatively young age. This was a debilitating experience for many, but certainly reduced the burden on dental services in terms of maintenance and repair.

Such improvements in oral health should be celebrated, but must not overshadow the growing oral health inequality within our society. The Plymouth Oral Health Needs Assessment undertaken in 2019 reported that 21% of five-year olds in Plymouth had visible tooth decay. That is fairly depressing when you consider tooth decay is entirely preventable; what is even more upsetting is when you look at the inequality across different areas of the city.

In wards with the greatest deprivation, there is 56% decay compared to only 7% in the least affected areas. There is something dreadfully wrong when we have this level of untreated disease and little prospect of children getting access to regular dental care any time soon.

Those fortunate enough to access NHS dental care, will find that costs have increased considerably. Since 2014 the total funding for NHS dentistry has decreased by 4% in real terms, while the patient charges applied by Government have increased by 9% in real terms. Government funding has decreased, patient charges have increased and access to regular NHS care has evaporated.

A system under pressure

Successive UK Governments have failed to address the underlying problems within NHS dentistry, where need and demand massively outstrip capacity. The situation continues to deteriorate as beleaguered members of the dental profession choose to operate within the private sector rather than remain within the NHS. The British Dental Association (BDA) has warned that NHS dentistry is “hanging by a thread” with many patients across the UK unable to access emergency care, let alone routine check-ups. This may in part be due to COVID-19, but data from England and Wales show that more than 1,000 dentists have left the NHS over the last five years.

The situation is particularly bleak within Devon where a Healthwatch Report in 2021 reported that no dental practices in the County were accepting new adult or child patients under the NHS. In March 2021, NHS England (SW) reported that there were 73,872 patients on a waiting list for NHS treatment in Devon, with over 16,000 in Plymouth alone.

Dental practices in Devon were struggling to fulfil their NHS activity targets before the pandemic. According to NHS England, less than 85% of commissioned activity was delivered during 2019/20 and they estimated that a 15% shortfall in activity translates into a loss of access for 97,300 patients. This would seem to imply that increased capacity with recruitment of more dentists would perhaps address the access issue. Unfortunately, the situation is not that simple. Firstly, we have a dental workforce shortage in the UK; secondly, dentists don't want to work in the NHS; thirdly recruitment and retention of dental professionals within rural areas is incredibly difficult.

Recruitment and retention

The challenges of recruitment and retention are partly due to the failings of the national strategy within dentistry. Rural communities tend to be disproportionately affected, and during the last five years we have seen an 8% decrease in the number of dentists working within the NHS in Devon. Dental practices struggle to attract members of the dental team to relocate to the South West and this has been recognised as a key barrier in delivering access.

When dentists first qualify, they spend one year in practice completing Dental Foundation Training. Practice allocation is a centrally controlled process and although graduates can identify their preference, this is not guaranteed. In 2019/20 only 14 out of 56 (25%) Peninsula Dental Graduates stayed in the South West to complete their training⁷. Of that 14, only 7 subsequently choose to work in general dental practice in the region. An annual recruitment of 12.5% PDS Graduates to dental practices in the South West does not feel like an optimal return on our investment, and we must explore initiatives that encourage students to remain in the area.

"Dental practices struggle to attract members of the dental team to relocate to the South West and this has been recognised as a key barrier in delivering access."

The University admissions team are committed to promoting career opportunities within dentistry for potential students from the region. PDS has recently been selected as one of only two dental schools in the UK to deliver a residential summer school to prospective students and is also planning to introduce a Foundation Year to improve access to those wishing to study dentistry. This is part of the Widening Participation Programme to ensure that PDS is able to recruit the best candidates, with the most appropriate skills and attitude to deliver person-centred care for our population. If we are able to increase interest in dentistry amongst prospective students locally, it may help provide a long-term solution for some of the issues which we currently face.

Peninsula Dental School

Despite the ongoing issues with NHS access in Plymouth, the population have undoubtedly benefitted from the establishment of the new dental school. Access to dental care has been possible at the dental education facilities in Devonport and Derriford, in addition to those in Exeter and Truro, with over 10,000 patients treated per year. Student community engagement and interprofessional education activities have had a huge impact on the oral health of many Plymouth residents through a variety of projects aimed at supporting the most vulnerable. These are incredibly important and valuable initiatives which do not only deliver improvements in oral health, but also expose students to the impacts of oral health inequality. The PDS vision was to deliver a dental workforce to support dental provision in the region. This has been successful in many regards and although we continue to experience workforce shortages, due partly to the challenges of recruitment and retention, the dental school has had a hugely positive impact within the region.

The future

The future for NHS Dentistry may seem bleak, but we are in the fortunate position to have the Dental School on our doorstep, with staff and students committed to increasing access to NHS dental services and improving the oral health of our city. At a community level, there is much we can do by working collaboratively and promoting a preventive approach focussed on the young and the most vulnerable.

Prevention and widening participation will not deliver immediate results in terms of improvements in access to NHS dentistry, and we also need radical and urgent changes to the dental contract. We need an open debate on what level of care we want, what level of service we need, and what we can actually afford.

Plymouth is a fantastic city, with an outstanding dental school. The school has led the way on dental education, community based oral health engagement and will continue to work with all stakeholders to improve access to NHS Dentistry in the region. By doing so, will hopefully restore the smile on the face of Plymouth.

Ian Mills is an Associate Professor of Primary Care Dentistry at Peninsula Dental School. His current research interests include recruitment and retention in dentistry within rural areas; person-centred care in dentistry; and mental health and well-being within the dental profession. Ian is a partner in an 8-surgery mixed practice in North Devon and is immediate Past Dean of the Faculty of General Dental Practice (UK).

COMMUNITY ENERGY: ACTION ON BIG ISSUES FROM A LOCAL LEVEL

**ALISTAIR MACPHERSON ,
CEO, PLYMOUTH ENERGY COMMUNITY**



**"Communities across the UK
have been putting people,
not profit, at the heart of the
energy system... They are
literally taking power into
their own hands"**

We need to fundamentally rethink of our relationship with energy. That means reducing how much energy we consume, swap out fossil fuels for sustainable alternatives, and achieve this in a just and equitable way. This can only be done with local support, which makes for an exciting opportunity to reframe our city's energy economy to benefit our own communities.

Plymouth is home to one of the most impactful community energy groups in the UK, Plymouth Energy Community. PEC has been at the forefront of a growing movement of local communities acting on some of the biggest environmental and social challenges of our time.

What is community energy?

It's what happens when people come together to find solutions to problems caused by the existing energy system. Communities across the UK have been putting people, not profit, at the heart of the energy system - ,motivated by

climate change, a desire to help people who can't heat their homes, and the need to keep energy generation profits local. They are literally taking power into their own hands: generating their own renewable energy, retrofitting homes in their areas to be energy efficient, and starting their own energy advice and support services.

Community energy generated £6m in local economic benefit in the UK in 2020, including £2.9m of savings on energy bills. These funds, flowing back to communities, could increase exponentially – hand in hand with new renewable energy, increased energy efficiency and energy system innovation.

This is a model for local democratic control over new renewable energy projects. It's a way that local people and organisations can actively contribute in the transition to a zero-carbon energy system, one that is fair for everyone and happens quickly.

And it's a growing movement. According to the Community Energy State of Sector report 2021, there are 424 active community energy organisations in the UK, employing more than 430 staff, supporting 3000 volunteers and reaching over 350,000 people. Grassroots education, fuel poverty reduction, community support and low carbon technologies all make community energy a necessary part of a future without fossil fuels.

Why do we need change?

Global emissions of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, are still rising. The rate of cuts to emissions needed to keep warming within 'safe' limits needs an unprecedented emergency response, and the commitment to urgent action needed over the next 10 years is still not there.

Warming of two to three degrees within the lifetime of our immediate families is the current realistic outcome. The consequences for food security, health, natural disasters, habitats, migration and the risk of triggering catastrophic climate tipping points are grim.

The impacts are upon us. Instability like this affects the most vulnerable and marginalised in society quickest and hardest.

This is a critical time for action before the window of opportunity closes.

What can community energy do in the face of this?

Any form of transition to net zero, particularly one that is fair for everyone, cannot happen without our communities. We need our government to lead, but community energy can also bring people together and inspire collective action. And that's what it takes to change the world, or a city, or a town, or a business, or a school, or a house.

The UK has the least energy efficient housing stock in Europe. This means high energy bills and, for many, a regular stark choice between heating or eating. 14,000 households in Plymouth struggle with this choice and more than 3,000 people nationally die every year due to the cold, unable to afford warm homes. Heating and powering our homes is a major source of energy consumption, and retrofitting them is vital if we are to improve their energy efficiency.

Our energy crisis is not going away. Extreme hikes in energy prices have resulted in suppliers going out of business, impacting over 38 million people. Energy bills are set to increase by 50% in the next six months, while the cost of living is skyrocketing and personal debt is rising to record levels. There is deep concern among residents and no clear pathway agreed to tackle the crisis.

Community energy is the ideal way to start addressing these challenges. This is about providing cheaper energy, but it's also about using the income to make communities more resilient. Community energy offers everyone a way to play a part in the great transition to sustainable energy, and to inspire and engage people of all ages and backgrounds.

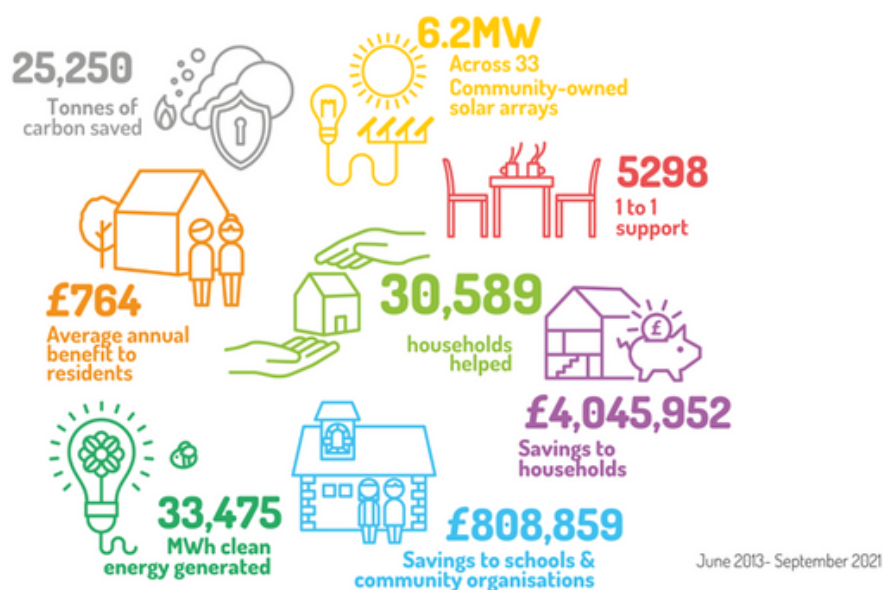
"Community energy generated £6m in local economic benefit in the UK in 2020, including £2.9m of savings on energy bills. These funds, flowing back to communities, could increase exponentially."

What's happening in Plymouth?

Plymouth Energy Community (PEC) is a multi-award-winning charity and a social enterprise, with a cooperative ethos. Its mission is to enable our communities to create a fair, affordable, zero-carbon energy system with local people at its heart. It includes a family of community-led organisations with projects that: bring local people together to act on fuel poverty and the climate crisis, increase local ownership and influence over energy solutions; improve community confidence to engage in the zero-carbon transition; and enable people to heat and power their homes affordably.

Since 2013 PEC has:

- Generated 33 MWh of clean power through the funding and installation of Ernesettle community solar farm and 32 roof top arrays on schools and community buildings (such as Plymouth Life Centre).
- Raised £2.4m through the sale of shares to over 500 community investors
- Saved schools and community organisations over £800,000 from energy bills through renewable power and energy efficiency improvements.
- Helped 30,589 households and carried out 5,298 home visits, saving each an average of £764 per year.
- Saved a total of 25,254 tonnes of carbon.
- Grown to a turnover of £1.5m per year with a dedicated team of 24 employed staff.



PEC'S impact since 2013

PEC is working with local businesses to install new solar; trialing models for community-owned renewable heat. We're providing a domestic energy advice and retrofit service targeted at helping residents at risk of fuel poverty and those with long-term health conditions. We're dispersing grants to households as part of the city's Covid response package and we've established PEC Homes, a community-led housing developer, to deliver affordable homes consistent with the UK's carbon reduction targets. PEC uses a mixture of community events, creative projects, volunteer training and strong collaborative partnerships to reach more Plymouth households and give everyone the opportunity to actively participate.

As a result Plymouth is one of the best examples in the country of how communities can help reframe their local energy system.

- PEC already owns and manages over 20% of the city's renewable power generation with profits from that social enterprise following back into fuel poverty support work.
- The proposed community solar farm at Chelson Meadow would increase the total solar power capacity in the city by over 40% and provide enough to supply 3800 homes
- Last year PEC helped over 6000 households, including 2000 with 1-1 advice, and supported 130 fuel poor households to get energy efficiency retrofits. We did this in a manner that secured £2m turnover for local SMEs.
- PEC has obtained planning approval for the first stage of a genuinely affordable and community-led housing project in Kings Tamerton. This innovative project will use creative design and the Energiesprong approach to ensure that the proposed 70 homes are energy efficient and put people and planet first.
- Moths to a Flame – Over 50,000 people got involved with the mass participation art project that was on display at COP26 last November in Glasgow.

We are proud of what PEC does – from upgrading existing and new-build homes to be less reliant on imported gas and more affordable to live in, to generating more local renewable energy, to supporting households to understand how to manage energy use and access available financial help.

But there is still so much more to do.

What is needed?

Before us now is an amazing opportunity to use community energy – a proven methodology – for change. All decision makers should recognise its importance in ensuring a healthier, fairer future for everyone.

Local area energy planning policy and funding can allow for more projects to be delivered at speed and more collaborative projects, such as Chelson Meadow in Plymouth, to happen. Tax relief, business rate and VAT incentives for community energy schemes is another pragmatic option.

Ofgem (the UK's energy regulator) should also have decarbonisation and social benefit as a primary aim. What's more, community-led renewable energy generation, heat, energy efficiency and retrofit projects could be supported by a national community energy fund to increase growth and impact.

We hope that more people will get involved in PEC this year – engaging in the conversation, learning about the policies that impact community energy, and supporting our projects in Plymouth. Because, by coming together, we can make our city an even better place to live.

"Plymouth is one of the best examples in the country of how communities can help reframe their local energy system... We're proud of what PEC does. But there's still much to do."

Alistair Macpherson is Chief Executive of Plymouth Energy Community. With a background sustainable development projects in the UK and overseas, he was named 'Community Energy Champion' at the 2016 Community Energy England Awards and 'South West Sustainable Energy Champion' at the 2017 Green Energy Awards.. Alistair is proud to be part of Plymouth's community energy revolution.

THE SOUTH WEST HOUSING CRISIS: LET'S PUT FIRST HOMES FIRST

**CLLR JAYNE KIRKHAM,
LEADER OF THE LABOUR GROUP,
CORNWALL COUNCIL**



"When it comes to the housing crisis, we are facing a perfect storm in the south west - and it's only getting worse. We need solutions now."

There is a massive shortage of genuinely affordable housing in the south west. What has caused this? Second home ownership. People relocating here now they can work from home. And the lucrative Airbnb, holiday and student letting market, discouraging landlords from renting to local people. It's a perfect storm – and it's only getting worse.

House prices in Plymouth have been rising faster than in London recently, and the average house in Cornwall is now £334,000 – the highest it has ever been. House prices in Cornwall are increasing 15% per year and are now higher than the national average, but wages are less than 80% of the national average at £20,700. That means you need 17 times your annual wage to buy a house! That has meant people selling up at vastly inflated prices and housing becoming even more unaffordable.

We have always had issues in the south west with low wages, seasonal work and high house prices. When I first became a councillor, I was

getting requests for help with homelessness mostly from single men who were losing their rooms in bedsits to make space for students and short-term holiday lets. However, over the four years I've been councillor, the problem has increased exponentially. Now I am getting at least two requests per week for help – from families with jobs, lives and schools in Falmouth. And there's a familiar pattern: tenants asked to leave their privately rented properties for conversion into Airbnbs or to be sold at the top of the market. It was reported at one point last year that there were 69 properties to let on Rightmove compared with 10,000 AirBnbs in Cornwall.

Recently I had to intervene when a family were offered a caravan in Looe as emergency accommodation. They were a mother and three children, living and going to school in Falmouth, one in GCSE year at Falmouth School. Even with the temporary three months' travel allowance that you can apply for if you jump through the hoops, it was simply too far for her to try to get her children to school in Falmouth: an hour and three-

"Around 8,000 people in Plymouth are waiting for social housing. In Cornwall, the waiting list is 24,000 people."

quarter journey by car, let alone trying to do it using Cornish public transport. Without support networks, families are put under stress and often fracture.

Around 8,000 people in Plymouth are waiting for social housing. In Cornwall, the waiting list was brought down a couple of years ago, but it has now shot back up to over 24,000 people. All are desperate for housing, and many are owed a statutory homelessness duty by the local authority. Because of Cornwall's rurality and stretched-out geography, people are being placed in emergency accommodation two hours or more away from their support networks. Sometimes as far as Cardiff. In the past, councils have relied on expensive emergency accommodation in hotels and B&Bs on insecure day-to-day contracts. Many of those people are pushed out during the tourist season, or last year, during the G7 when nearly 200 homeless people in Cornwall were displaced.

This is not just happening in Cornwall. Over two hundred households in Plymouth are in temporary accommodation according to November 2021 data, including 131 children. In Cornwall, the Council has bought a holiday park as emergency accommodation and are planning to buy new larger mobile units for couples. They did a lot of work trying to get 'everybody in' at the start of the pandemic. Despite the rough sleeper count in November 2019 showing there were only 24 people rough sleeping in Cornwall, 168 people presented as needing emergency accommodation within the first few months when Covid hit.

Our huge problem is second homes. The number of those that lie empty for most of the year is intensely frustrating. In simple terms, if they were utilised, then everyone on our housing list could have a home. To add insult to injury, people can register their second homes as a business if letted for ten weeks, slipping through a loophole where they pay no council tax or business rates. This costs the taxpayer £18 million per year in Cornwall alone.

The owners of over 8,000 second/holiday homes in Cornwall, who have registered their properties as 'holiday let business premises', also received Covid grants for loss of business income totaling just over £169 million. It is shocking that this amount of taxpayer funded Covid business grants went to second home/holiday let owners in Cornwall. £100 million of that money left Cornwall altogether.

So, we all know there's a problem. We see it around us. Nurses and teachers get jobs in our communities but have to turn them down as they can't afford to live here. Hospitality and care workers can't afford to live within commuting distance of where they work. Our children can't continue to live in the place they were born and brought up.

Our public services are crumbling for lack of staff. For example, thousands of people in Plymouth are forced to go without an NHS dentist because it's simply too difficult to attract them to the city. And there are 700 people in Cornwall who need care, but the council simply cannot provide it due to lack of available carers.

I've been working with Plymouth's Labour MP, Luke Pollard, and Leader of the Labour Group on Plymouth City Council, Tudor Evans, to build a campaign around this issue and get the debate heard in the House of Commons. Luke launched our 'First Homes Not Second Homes' manifesto at a housing debate in Westminster Hall late last year. He has since obtained a meeting with the Housing Minister to discuss the points raised in the manifesto.

Our manifesto has five clear, simple asks:

- New powers from government for councils to progressively raise taxes on holiday lets and unused second homes, up to a quadrupling of council tax where homes are left empty for much of the year;
- A licensing regime for second homes, Airbnbs and holiday lets – with a minimum of 51% of homes in any community being for local people. Councils should have the powers to raise this level to reflect local circumstances.
- A ‘Last Shop in the Village Fund’ – powers for local councils to introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy on holiday lets and Airbnbs, administered by local authorities, to support local shops, pharmacies, post offices, and pubs;
- Commitment to build affordable homes and social housing across the south west, with a priority for local people
- To lock in the discount of new homes for future renters and buyers, so that affordable homes are not lost after the first family moves on.

We need solutions quickly in Devon and Cornwall. And we could go further – and faster – if our communities had more robust devolved powers. Local authorities in Scotland have been able to start consulting on a licensing and registration scheme for AirBnBs, and Wales is already tripling council tax on second homes.

We are facing these issues too in the south west but we don’t have the powers needed to tackle them. This truly has become a crisis; it’s time to put first homes first.

Jayne Kirkham is the Labour Group Leader on Cornwall Council and ran for Parliament in Truro and Falmouth in 2017. She lives in Falmouth with her son.

A REFLECTION ON THE WORK OF THE PLYMOUTH COMMISSION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

**CLLR REBECCA SMITH,
PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL**



**"Recent tragedies have
shone a bright light on the
issue of male violence
against women and girls in
our city."**

2021 – a year that will forever be marked in the collective memory of Plymothians. And sadly not just for the ups and downs of the Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions we endured together. It was also the year when male violence against women became ever-more visible.

The abduction and murder of Sarah Everard in London on 3rd March 2021 by Police Officer Wayne Couzens sent shockwaves throughout the country. To Plymouth's horror, six months later, on 12th August, the mass shooting in Keyham saw the domestic homicide of Maxine Davison and the murder of Kate Shepherd, along with Lee Martyn, his 3 year old daughter Sophie, and Stephen Washington. In November, the death of Bobbi-Anne McLeod left the city reeling again. These Plymouth tragedies have shone a bright light on the issue of male violence against women in our city.

As a result, in the wake of the death of Bobbi-Anne McLeod, a piece of work was launched to investigate the scale and impact of male violence against

women and girls and help women and girls feel safer in Plymouth.

The Plymouth Violence against Women and Girls Commission was announced at the end of November and work began at pace to longlist, shortlist and invite Commission members from Plymouth and around the country to join us in the work. I am delighted with the range of expertise and experience we have been able to draw on with Commissions members from the Police, business, education, academia, the voluntary sector, media and healthcare.

We were particularly pleased that Nazir Afzal OBE agreed to serve as our Advisor. Nazir is a former Chief Crown Prosecutor for the North West and is well known for his experience in prosecuting cases involving male violence against women and girls.

As Chair of the Commission, I believed it was crucial to keep party politics out of the work. It is about women, not politics, and this work needs to be done regardless of who is politically leading the city. It was therefore particularly significant when members of Plymouth City Council unanimously

"I am delighted with the range of experience and expertise we have been able to draw on."

supported a cross-party Motion at Full Council to endorse and support the work of the Commission and commit to delivering whatever was asked of the Council. This support is vital to the long-term delivery of the Commission's recommendations.

From the outset of the Commission, it was clear that the scope of any piece of work exploring male violence against women and girls is wide-ranging. However, with just three months to investigate, report and recommend we based our work on three strands:

- What would it take to reduce rates of domestic abuse and domestic violence in Plymouth?
- What would it take to see a cultural shift amongst men and boys away from sexual harassment, misogyny, everyday sexism and violence against women and girls in Plymouth?
- What would it take for women and girls across Plymouth to feel safe on our streets?

To start, we held an online Q&A session which provided a sense-check to see what issues came up and where people's concerns lay. We ran an online survey – asking for groups and individuals to share their stories, or the work they are doing to see a step change in reducing violence against women and girls – and received over 1300 responses. We held student and young people's voice events and asked key organisations across the city to brief us on what they were already doing to tackle the issues around male violence against women and girls.

"The violence we've seen tells us we need to go further... The impetus for change could not be clearer."

We spent around 40 hours listening to oral evidence. In fact, there were so many voices to hear that we ran parallel evidence sessions over two days with the Commission split in half to maximise our time.

During our evidence gathering, we found much already being done to tackle male violence against women and girls. Support for victims, work with perpetrators to break cycles of behaviour, bystander training to equip those who want to help, proactive work at universities around consent and attitudes, collaborative work on the Evening and Night Time Economy, male-populated work places beginning to recognise the work they can play in promoting culture change

In addition, we heard about new and innovative ways of tackling issues relating to male violence against women and girls from across the country. We also heard from many victims and supporters who bravely shared their stories with us.

But, the violence we've seen in the past year– and in countless years before it – tells us that we need to go further. Taking time to listen has enabled us to develop recommendations that are robust and evidence based.

This piece of work has opened my eyes even further to the sheer scale of male violence against women and girls. The impetus for change could not be

clearer. The stories we have heard have been harrowing and heart-breaking – from those who've been victims of abuse and violence, as well as those who, whilst not direct victims, do not feel safe because of the prevailing culture we live in.

It is my hope that our report and recommendations address both. That we as policymakers can learn from past tragedies to help prevent future ones. And that we can also bring about a long-term culture shift in the attitudes and actions of men and boys towards women.

Please do read our report.* Consider the recommendations. Commit to doing what you can to help Plymouth lead the way in reducing male violence against women and girls.

Let us be a city that calls out inappropriate behaviour, that embeds a different way of treating one another in our work, education, social and family time, that respects and values difference and diversity.

Let Plymouth be known as the safest city in the country for women and girls to live, work and enjoy.

*This paper was put together before the Commission's report was published.

Rebecca Smith has been a member of Plymouth City Council since May 2018 and is Chair of the Planning Committee. In 2019 she stood as Parliamentary Candidate in Plymouth Sutton and Devonport. She has worked in Brussels and London and her career has involved public engagement and communications, operations management and research and policy development in areas such as addictions and criminal justice.

A TIME TO REMEMBER. PLYMOUTH AND THE FALKLANDS CAMPAIGN — 40 YEARS ON.

COLONEL IAN MOORE



Image: Plymouth Live; Max Channon

"40 years ago this national crisis triggered in Plymouth an urge to work together."

Plymouth, our Ocean City, has through history been the launchpad of ventures of great moment. A visit to The Box Museum reminds us of these chapters: Drake, the Mayflower, the voyages of Captain Cook, Darwin in the Beagle, the convoys of the world wars, the return of Sir Francis Chichester. History happens here.

In April 1982 – 40 years ago – a significant convulsion occurred. The armed forces of Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands, a British territory. This paper will tell the story of how Plymouth rose to the challenges that were demanded: Plymouth ships, Plymouth's huge dockyard, the Royal Marine and Army commando forces based in and around Plymouth, and the widespread network of Plymothians.

Background

In December 1981 a junta took power in Argentina. It declared that 1982 was to be "the year of the Malvinas" – the Argentinian name for the Falkland Islands, 400 miles away in the South Atlantic, and a British possession since 1824. On the morning of 2nd April a force of over 1000 came ashore on the Falkland Islands. Despite gallant delaying tactics by the Royal Marine detachment there, the governor Sir Rex Hunt was soon forced to surrender.

What was Britain to do? The roar of the debate in the House of Commons on that Saturday still rings in one's ears, when Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher declared through the hubbub that a task force would embark for the South Atlantic in the coming week. She had vociferous support, including from Leader of the Opposition Michael Foot. The announcement caused ripples

Plymouth Royal Naval ships.

The task force was required to demonstrate the capacity – if necessary – to land a force to expel the invader and retrieve British territory, 8000 miles away in the South Atlantic. The naval fleet to achieve such an effect was considerable.

In the first weeks following deployment there were strenuous efforts to effect a diplomatic solution, including an early United Nations resolution. However, it soon became apparent that the Argentinians would not withdraw.

The Plymouth ships that deployed were 15 frigates and three survey ships. In addition many Royal Fleet Auxiliary Store ships, Tankers and Container Ships were modified, loaded and deployed in the Dockyard under extreme time pressure. This included...

- Two Type 22 Frigates: HMS Brilliant and Broadsword. These were the most modern ships of the Plymouth fleet. They were fast. They significantly had the Seawolf anti-air missile, and four Exocet anti-ship missiles, instead of a gun. There were two Lynx helicopters aboard, able to launch missiles including the formidable SKUA.
- Seven Type 21 frigates: HMS Active, Alacrity, Ardent, Arrow and Avenger and, later, HMS Ambuscade and Antelope. Fast, small and light, with aluminum superstructure, they were nicknamed 'boy racers'. The ship had a small crew. Each carried a Lynx helicopter and a 4.5 inch Mk8 gun.
- Two Rothesay class frigates from an older generation: HMS Plymouth and Yarmouth. Amongst other weaponry these had twin 4.5 Mk6 gun turrets, very useful for gunfire support of troops ashore.
- Four even older Leander class frigates with names from Greek mythology: HMS Andromeda, Argonaut, Minerva and Penelope. These were broader ships, good in heavy ocean weather with a larger crew. HMS Andromeda was fitted with Seawolf.
- Two Swiftsure Class submarines: HMS Spartan and Splendid.

The main challenge for this large fleet of frigates was that they were not particularly equipped to counter the air threat, which was to prove considerable. It was the Type 22's that were to hold pole position, in 'Bomb Alley.'

All these Plymouth ships would see action, in a way not experienced since the Second World War, and two would tragically be sunk.

Plymouth's Commando Forces

In 1982 this highly trained amphibious force, ever ready for the unexpected, was principally Plymouth-based.

General Moore commanded the operation from Hamoaze House, Mount Wise. He was subsequently to be the Commander of the whole Divisional landing force in the Falklands. The teeth of the landing force was to be 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines. The Brigade Commander, Julian Thompson, had his headquarters at Stonehouse Barracks, happily colocated with the Commodore of Amphibious Warfare Mike Clapp and his staff.

The brigade consisted of three commandos (battalion-sized units of 600) of which two were Plymouth based: 40 Commando at Seaton Barracks Crownhill, and 42 Commando at Bickleigh barracks on the moor. The Brigade Air Squadron of Gazelle and Scout light helicopters, along with the Commando Logistic Regiment, was at Coypool. At the Citadel was 29 Commando Light Regiment Royal Artillery and at Crownhill fort was 59 Commando Squadron Royal Engineers. All were commando trained and wore the green beret.

Nor should we forget the Commando Forces Royal Marines Band, whose vital war task was as medical assistants and stretcher bearers, and who considerably sustained morale on the long trip south with concerts in a number of ships. The total land force deployed from Plymouth was over 3,500.

In those days many of the families lived in their own homes locally or in quarters close to their bases. In early April 1982 all were looking forward to a well-deserved fortnight of Easter leave, with plans well hatched. 42 Commando, gunners, sappers, and logisticians had just returned from three months arctic training in North Norway – a most testing period. 40 Commando were completing training in north-west UK. The Brigade commander and his staff were coming back from exercise planning in Denmark

Then in the middle of the night on April 2nd the balloon went up, and the recall systems went into overdrive: telephones rang and kit was repacked in countless homes. Dad was suddenly bound for islands 8000 miles away in the South Atlantic, and who knew what would happen? Overheard in the Adjutant's office at Bickleigh : 'Yes lad, I do know where Marrakech is, but I still expect you on parade at 1200 tomorrow!'

The Coypool based Logistic Regiment drove their lorries 24/7 for four days to distribute 13,400 tons of war stocks from multiple depots to shipping at many southern ports

Between 4 – 9 April the whole brigade was sailing south 3000 miles to Ascension Island to carry out a complete sorting of the war stocks.

Devonport dockyard – 1982.

Extracts from a Paper by MD Devonport Dockyard- 1982

In 1982 Devonport dockyard was the largest repair organization in Western Europe. The workforce numbered 13,500 and there were nine blue-collar and five white-collar trade unions. It is a trait of the British that war brings out our collective spirit. This was dramatically demonstrated in the Falklands conflict.

It was quickly realised that the task force would require Ships Taken Up From Trade (STUFT) to transport the men and equipment to the war area. Many were dotted around European ports and sailed to UK dockyards so the conversion work could be undertaken very swiftly to equip them for war.

This was a national emergency, with the usual demarcation of work set aside: shipwrights did joiners work, coppersmiths did plumbers work, officers swept up dirt and did labourer's duty. The average time taken for conversion was eight days, using two 12-hour shifts. There was no need for the MD to encourage the workforce; they were carried forward on a wave of patriotism

**"In 1982
Devonport
dockyard was the
largest repair
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Western Europe."**

The major task converting the merchant ships lay in the manufacture and fitting of large structural units: aircraft landing platforms, aircraft hangars, and structural extensions for accommodation. 600 tons of steel were fabricated for this purpose, and 400,000 feet of welding was deposited.

The workforce involved in these conversions averaged around 250 men per shift on board with an additional 100 involved in shift working ashore in support. The whole exercise was able to achieve quite remarkable targets.

This section would not be complete without a word about Atlantic Conveyor and her Captain - Ian North. His service contract was extended for the Falklands crisis and he was sent to Devonport to take command of the Atlantic Conveyor. Ian North was a character, christened Captain Birdseye by the dockyard workforce; his spirit and enthusiasm were a tonic to the men working on his ship.

The Sharp End and the Home Front

The main bulk of the taskforce sailed from Ascension Island on 8th May. As the weeks passed it became increasingly apparent that a peaceful solution was unobtainable. A miasma of anxiety thickened over Plymouth in the spring days.

An early development was the dispatch to retake South Georgia. Two Plymouth ships were involved: HMS Plymouth and Brilliant. After an appalling start to this mission, with the crashing of two helicopters on a glacier, the second in command of 42 Commando (Bickleigh) – a mountain and arctic specialist - retrieved the situation and accepted the Argentinian surrender (22 April). The island was then garrisoned by a company of 42 Commando.

The sinking of HMS Sheffield by enemy Exocet on 4th May darkened the scene considerably. This was for real and tension at home ratcheted up.

Back in Plymouth many 'wives clubs' formed to exchange news and comfort one another (a typical group gathering would involve 70 – 80 participants). Dingles and Paignton Zoo provided fun days for families – just two examples of many. Plumbers and electricians often 'forgot' to bill their customers. All over the city people exerted themselves to express support.

Such moral support became critical from 21 May during the landing of commando forces in San Carlos Water in the Falklands, and the subsequent advance across the island to defeat the enemy.

On that day and thereafter HM ships were under persistent attack. HMS Argonaut was particularly damaged, and soon after HMS Ardent was set ablaze by three Skyhawks – losing 23 dead. Two days later, another Plymouth ship – the recently arrived HMS Antelope - sank when an unexploded bomb went off.

Through these terrifying days Plymouth ships fought skillfully and valiantly in Bomb Alley, destroying a number of enemy aircraft. They ensured that a largely Plymouth-based commando land force and war stocks got safely ashore – to carry the task forward.

Danger was imminent ashore. On 21 May two Gazelle aircraft of the Brigade Air Squadron (Coypool) were destroyed by ground fire, with 3 out of 4 aircrew killed. On 27th May bombs were dropped on the stores depot and the hospital of the Logistic Regiment, killing five and wounding twenty-seven. The surgical teams of the “Red and Green life machine” carried on operating.

"Veterans and their families will recall the mounting stress and tension of those weeks."

On 25th April two Exocet missiles struck at the Atlantic Conveyor, with its precious cargo of Chinook helicopters. Captain Ian North was drowned soon after his ship went down. All these losses struck deep back in Guz...

The loss of the Chinooks meant 3 Commando Brigade was forced to march, fully laden, across more than 80 miles of grim uplands of East Falklands, to do battle with a dug-in enemy. They suffered on the hillsides in increasingly bitter weather, with training on Dartmoor and in the Arctic proving a life saver.

At this distance – 40 years on – veterans and their families will recall the mounting stress and tension of those weeks. So many Plymouth-based men, and the crews of Plymouth based ships, were tried to the utmost. Back home news of progress was received with relief and admiration; at the same time families waited on tenterhooks for bad news coming to their door.

The critical time came on the night of 11th - 12th June as three major night attacks went in. All sustained casualties but all were successful, none more so than 42 Commando's assault on Mount Harriet. Charlie company 40 Commando (Crownhill) took a further ridge. Two days later, white flags could be seen over Stanley.

The memories of the joy and relief of the homecomings in late June are treasured. Remembered in a different way is the sorrow of those who lost their loved ones and comrades, and the suffering of the wounded – often prolonged.

To conclude it is worth recalling the telegram of General Moore, of Hamoaze House, having accepted the surrender of General Menendez on 14th June 1982: "The Falkland Islands are once more under the government desired by their inhabitants. God save the Queen.'

In Argentina the repressive rule of the military junta was dislodged, and replaced by a democratic form of presidential government, which has existed since.

Out at Merrivale Quarry through the subsequent winter was carved in Dartmoor granite a massive memorial to those who gave their lives. This was shipped to Port Stanley, where it stands, proud and prominent.... a great chunk of the West Country.

40 years ago this national crisis triggered in Plymouth an urge to work together. Goodwill and neighborliness abounded. This finds a strong echo today with our reaction to the heroic courage of the Ukrainians, battling against the Russian invasion.

NUDGE COMMUNITY BUILDERS: BRINGING PLYMOUTH'S EMPTY BUILDINGS BACK TO LIFE

WENDY HART & HANNAH SLOGGETT

**FOUNDERS AND DIRECTORS,
NUDGE COMMUNITY BUILDERS**



**"Our vision is to make
Union Street
somewhere the whole
world loves."**

'Why is no one doing anything about these empty buildings?' It's a question regularly heard in Plymouth. And there are certainly some significant assets standing empty – the Palace Theatre, the Royal Fleet Club, the Pot Black and the Cooperage to name just a few.

For our communities, these buildings don't just stand empty –they create a feeling of under-investment, a sense that no one cares, and even give rise to concerns about safety. But these buildings tell a story about the history of our city. They're unique, have fantastic features and are often listed or contribute to conservation-area status.

But before diving into the complexities, let's remember how far we've come as a city. It's easy to forget the buildings that only ten years ago were at risk. Devonport Guildhall, Devonport Column and The Market Hall all stood empty before Real Ideas took them on with the support of Plymouth City Council.

And who remembers Royal William Yard before it was regenerated? The Council created an environment where the likes of Urban Splash wanted to invest in heritage buildings in the city, and they supported housing in The Ship for example.

More recently, Nudge has joined the crew of people bringing buildings back into use along Union Street. So, since we know it can succeed, what is holding back redevelopment of other buildings? Here we use our learning from Nudge to reflect on this question.

Who are Nudge?

We are local residents in Stonehouse, working to transform our area in a way that is authentic, loving and transformational. Over the last decade, we've gone from volunteering and holding street parties to working full-time to purchase derelict buildings and bring them back to life. Our vision is to make Union Street somewhere the whole world loves.

Nudge approaches problems differently, alongside a growing Social Enterprise community in our city. Set up as a Community Benefit Society in 2017, Nudge is running and renovating four buildings along Union Street. Our board is made up of people who live or work within one mile, and our small staff team all live within walking distance and live or have grown up in the area. We spend at least 50% of our budget within a mile and 95% in Plymouth.

Our vision for Union Street

Union Street is a main route into the city centre, welcoming people from the ferry port and cutting through the centre of Stonehouse. Originally built in 1815, it has a fascinating history including stories of arrival and departures at Millbay docks, theatres, cinemas, photographic studios and bars. It was known as the 'Navy playground of the world' for decades and, more recently, for its thriving dance culture. But it has been neglected for too long.

There's an incredibly strong, connected community in Stonehouse. We look out for each other, and many residents have lived in the area for generations. Sadly, though, local people sometimes tell us that living in this area can make you feel like you and your children are less likely to succeed, and that you are

judged by services and organisations. We've experienced this ourselves, and issues our community have to deal with on a day-to-day basis are varied and complex: challenges with debt, literacy, fuel poverty, unemployment, addiction, mental and physical wellbeing and loneliness.

There are currently 15 large empty buildings along the street, a quarter of the land. Many have been empty for over 25 years and are in complex ownership, contributing very little to the local economy. This adds to the run-down feel of the street, which has a high crime rate and is in desperate need of a different approach. Our approach has developed from our instincts as residents and a drive that our community deserves more.

The empty buildings on this street are not owned by the Council; they are in private ownership that is often complex. This includes properties with multiple ownership, flying freeholds and investors with these properties on their books for more than they are worth. To add to this, there are national issues with retail and evening uses, as well as market failure set in along the street.

As a community benefit society, we can raise community shares. This creates real collective buy-in and ownership over the assets we take on. For example we raised £206,000 for The Clipper from 156 people in 2018. They are offered up to 3.6% return each year on their investment and we plan to pay everyone back over ten years. This brings money into the area but also creates an amazing sense of community, with shareholders bringing their skills to the table and really connecting with the success of the homes and work spaces we create.

We've also noticed the barriers that small start-up businesses face when it comes to finding spaces. Working in partnership with a local landowner to take over The Plot, we've created a home for 17 small businesses and organisations that offer things our community need or asked for. If you haven't been in yet, stop by and experience Jabulani, a food court supporting BAME women entrepreneurs; meet local sellers and makers; and join in with the activities and opportunities the tenants have created.

More recently, we bought The Millennium Building, a beautiful 1930s cinema that holds memories for every generation in Plymouth. We bought it in partnership with a private developer, Eat Work Art, and are starting to put the ground floor to use this year. We ran a share offer, raising £351,000 of investment from 512 people to push forward with the building.

The challenge ahead

Grit, determination and a long-term focus is needed on these buildings, and our community has had their hopes raised several times when it comes to regeneration on Union Street. Often the owner doesn't want to sell, or has unrealistic ideas about land value. And financing the purchase and renovation is a whole other can of worms - empty buildings are high risk and complicated!

We've had to be brave, and there have been a lot of sleepless nights. But these buildings hold people's memories. Local people care about them and they can bring a real sense of hope to see them looked after and used. Managing expectations is really important, so we work in an incremental way. We ask what makes the building safe enough to use for now? Then what can we do? And gradually we grow a space that is fit for purpose and reflects the history and community around it.

We are making progress. The Plymouth and SW Devon Local

Plan, and the work of Economic Development, has helped. And more people are investing in social enterprises thanks to the agenda-raising work of the Plymouth Social Enterprise Network and the Plymouth Octopus Project, with the School for Social Entrepreneurs also upskilling local people and helping them along their business journey. It's no wonder we're a Social Enterprise City.

"Lots of places talk about community or they have it above their door, but here it is genuinely always around you, I have had so much support from Nudge. And I love all of the people who come in. Everyone wants to help each other. If I hadn't found here I'm not sure where I would be - I definitely wouldn't have my own business."

Rosalie, a single parent, with English as a second language, whose daughter goes to the local school.

Avoiding demolition

From an environmental perspective, demolition of a building is a real waste of resources. As a city, we are looking at reducing our carbon footprint – and reusing what we have is more energy efficient than demolition and rebuilding

There are challenges about making older buildings function efficiently but, overall, viewing these buildings as giant recycling projects is the most environmentally friendly thing to do.

Buildings like the Millennium were built to an incredibly high standard. With their gorgeous features and inspiring scale, they have stood the test of time and make for fantastic, unique spaces for modern uses. The quality of the materials used is unrivalled compared to many modern developments.

Making building redevelopment work for everyone

Investment in special buildings can sometimes lead to gentrification, where communities intended to benefit from regeneration are displaced or otherwise miss out on the long-term benefits. As a city, we need to be smart about how we manage building redevelopment – so that its benefits are felt by the local economy and community.

These buildings can be brought back to life by community businesses, social enterprises and private businesses working together in a way that genuinely benefits the diverse community already living here, as well as people who will come to live or work in the area in the future.

Our communities aren't just involved in ideas and planning: they also have the best chance to get the jobs we create, to run businesses in our new buildings, to live in the homes we create and to benefit from new opportunities we bring to the street.

It will help to inspire more people to get involved and take the plunge together to set up micro-businesses that generate more income for local people. And it will help to circulate and retain more money in our very local economy by giving us the capacity

It will also create a busier, more active Union Street where people know they can come for opportunities and to shop for unique and curious locally made things. Let's work together for more local spend, local skills and local love!

Wendy Hart and Hannah Sloggett are joint founders and directors of Nudge Community Builders. They live in Stonehouse and have volunteered in their community for over 10 years. Wendy has a professional background in social housing and supporting the voluntary sector. Hannah was a Planning Manager for Plymouth City Council with a background in community regeneration.



PLYMOUTH WHITE PAPERS