

In the Chamber of the House of Commons a couple of weeks ago I said that I was Cornish, not English. But what does it mean to 'be Cornish'? This is my view, in this week's Camborne & Redruth Voice. We have always been and will always be an inclusive society:

"I have written about this before, but I thought that this was a good time to again highlight my own definition of what 'being Cornish' is.

I fully appreciate others may have different views but I don't buy into the solely ethno-cultural definition. If you go back far enough, we're all from another place.

The fact is that in Cornwall, people have always come and gone, and many, like me, have come home again! In my personal view, there are three different ways in which you can 'be Cornish': firstly, there's Cornish by birth. Secondly, it's possible to be Cornish by marriage. But thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, I believe someone can be Cornish 'on purpose' or by choice. The first two are obvious, but this third definition requires explanation.

Throughout history, Cornwall has always been an inclusive, welcoming place - a place of sanctuary and safe harbour – a port in the storm. But Cornwall has a long tradition of looking outwards too: a key trading route across the oceans; the export of our world-famous mining expertise leading to the Cornish diaspora that has resulted in the pasty festivals of Mexico, and other Cornish festivals in America and Australasia; in the last century, the first place from which a transatlantic message was ever sent – Marconi's simple morse-code signal for the letter "s" – which travelled more than 2,000 miles from Cornwall to Canada; and Goonhilly Satellite Earth Station which relayed the pictures of the first moon landing to our TV screens.

I believe that someone can be 'Cornish on purpose' if, in making Cornwall their home, they are curious and interested, and respect and value that Cornwall is a very special place, that it has a distinct culture and heritage that can be seen in landscape, heard in the dialect and the language, tasted in the food, enjoyed in the dance and the music.

Anyone, in fact, that respects the rich cultural traditions of this place.

So, people can be considered 'Cornish on purpose' if they make Cornwall their home with a curious and inclusive mindset, wanting to observe, listen, learn, value and get involved in all things Cornish, but not because they want to recreate Cornwall in the image of the place that they have come from, or to close Cornwall off from our traditions of sanctuary and safe harbour, but because they want to maintain and develop our rich heritage and culture of inclusivity.

People that share a love of the real Cornwall, looking beyond the picture postcard Cornwall and leaning directly into what it is really like to live here, including the challenging elements - the low wages, poverty and crippling house prices – people capable of empathising with those that are struggling to make ends meet, and doing what they can to offer sanctuary and safe harbour.

As far as I'm concerned, these people should be welcomed proudly and enthusiastically. I consider them as Cornish as I am."