

# WENDRON PARISH EVIDENCE OVERVIEW REPORT

## No 5: Business and Employment

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## 1. Planning Policy Context

- 1.1 National planning policy supports the sustainable growth and expansion of rural businesses, recognising that a prosperous rural economy can be achieved through a range of approaches, including the growth of existing enterprises, the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based businesses, the conversion of existing buildings, and the development of well-designed new buildings. National policy also recognises that some rural businesses may need to be located beyond existing settlements, where this is justified by the nature of the enterprise and where environmental and accessibility considerations have been properly addressed.
- 1.2 At the local level, Cornwall Local Plan Policy 5 requires neighbourhood plans to identify and protect land and premises that support local economic strategies. It supports the sustainable growth of the rural economy, including farm diversification, tourism, and the provision of workspace suited to rural business needs. Cornwall Local Plan Policy 21 similarly supports employment development in sustainable locations, particularly where it makes use of previously developed land or existing buildings. Cornwall Local Plan Policy 2(h) also supports provision for home working through live/work units, where the residential use remains subordinate to the business use.
- 1.3 The evidence also highlights the importance of ensuring that business development, conversions, and building improvements are of a high design quality, particularly in rural and historically sensitive locations. In this respect, relevant Cornwall Council guidance on local distinctiveness, farmsteads and the retrofit of older buildings provides an important context for shaping future proposals in Wendron Parish.
- 1.4 The policy context therefore supports a positive approach to sustaining and enhancing the local rural economy, while ensuring that economic development is compatible with the Parish's landscape, heritage, environmental quality and settlement pattern.

## 2. Baseline Conditions

- 2.1 Wendron Parish has a diverse and locally rooted rural economy. The evidence identifies **99 registered businesses** operating in the Parish across a wide range of sectors. The largest category is **agriculture, animal services and environmental management**, accounting for **19.2%** of businesses. **Hospitality and leisure** account for a further **16.2%**, while **engineering and technology, construction and property development**, and **miscellaneous services** each account for **11.1%**. Smaller but still important sectors include automotive services,

professional and technical services, retail and artisanal production, community and cultural services, and health and wellbeing.

2.2 The economy of the Parish is also characterised by a strong culture of self-employment and home-based working. The 2021 Census recorded **433 self-employed residents** and **457 residents working mainly from home**, representing around **30% of the working population**. This is above the Cornwall average and close to the national average, indicating that flexible, small-scale and home-based enterprise forms an important part of the local economy.

2.3 In addition to dispersed businesses across the Parish, the evidence identifies two principal concentrations of employment activity at **Old Woodyard, Laity** and **Halwin Industrial Estate, Porkellis**. These sites are described as particularly important to the local economy and make a contribution not only at parish level, but also more widely within Cornwall. Their retention and appropriate modernisation are therefore important to the economic resilience of the area.



2.4 Wendron also has a relatively skilled resident population. Census data cited in the evidence shows that **36%** of residents hold qualifications at Level 4 or above, which is higher than the averages for both Cornwall and England. The occupational profile also includes relatively high proportions of residents working in skilled trades, professional occupations, and managerial roles. The proportion of small employers and own-account workers is noticeably above Cornwall and England averages. Taken together, these data suggest a parish with a relatively strong base of technical skill, enterprise and small business activity.

2.5 The Parish also benefits from its proximity to wider employment centres. Helston functions as the nearest main centre for employment and services, while additional opportunities are available in Truro, Falmouth and Camborne-Redruth. RNAS Culdrose is also identified as a significant source of employment within the wider area. Nonetheless, supporting employment opportunities within the Parish remains important, both to sustain local communities and to reduce the need to travel longer distances for work.

2.6 Agriculture remains an important part of Wendron's economy and character. Farms and other land-based enterprises contribute not only to employment and business activity, but also to the stewardship of the Parish's landscape, biodiversity, historic environment and recreational resources. However, the evidence notes that farm incomes are often modest and unpredictable, and that there is a continuing need to support diversification to provide

additional and more resilient income streams. Suitable forms of diversification may include food processing, farm retail, rural crafts, home-based digital businesses and small-scale tourism, provided these are sensitively designed and located.

### 3. Community and Business Views

- 3.1 As part of the evidence base, a local business survey was undertaken to understand the profile, needs and views of businesses operating within Wendron Parish. A total of **10 businesses** responded. Half of the respondents were self-employed individuals without staff, and half were business owners employing staff. The businesses represented a varied range of sectors, including construction, tourism, professional services, IT, hospitality, conservation, floristry and community provision. Most respondents were well established in the Parish, with half having been present for more than ten years.
- 3.2 Survey responses indicate that businesses value the Parish's peaceful rural setting, strong sense of community, access to countryside and the ability to work flexibly close to home. These qualities form part of Wendron's attractiveness as a place to live and do business. All respondents rated Wendron as between average and very good as a place to do business, with no respondents giving it a poor rating.
- 3.3 At the same time, the survey identified a number of concerns affecting business operations. These included **high energy costs, poor broadband and mobile connectivity, limited local spending power**, and in some cases constraints arising from road, lane or bridleway conditions. Businesses identified a number of local factors as important to their success, particularly **community support, local tourism, affordable housing for staff, not having to commute, transport links**, and **digital communications**. Access to skilled labour and proximity to customers were generally ranked lower.
- 3.4 Most businesses with premises reported that they currently had sufficient space. However, home-based businesses identified a need for improved digital connectivity and, in many cases, additional office or workshop space. This reflects the wider importance of home-based working within the Parish and the need for planning policies to recognise and support this growing part of the local economy.
- 3.5 The survey also demonstrated a strong interest in sustainability. **Eighty per cent** of respondents considered renewable energy important to the future of their business, and **half** expected to adopt electric vehicles within the next five years. However, EV charging infrastructure was reported to be lacking. Public transport was also seen as insufficient by a majority of respondents, particularly because of the distance to bus stops, limited service coverage and timings that did not align well with business needs.
- 3.6 Overall, the business survey suggests that local businesses are generally positive about operating in Wendron, but that future resilience will depend on better infrastructure, support for flexible working, protection of employment space, and a planning framework that enables sustainable growth without undermining the environmental qualities that make the Parish attractive in the first place.

## 4. Key Issues to be Addressed in the NDP

- 4.1 The evidence points to a number of key issues that should be addressed through the Neighbourhood Development Plan.
  - 4.2 **Protecting existing employment assets.** The Parish contains a diverse range of businesses and a number of important employment sites, particularly Old Woodyard, Laity, and Halwin Industrial Estate, Porkellis. These sites make an important contribution to the local economy and should be protected from unnecessary loss, while also allowing for appropriate upgrading and environmental improvement.
  - 4.3 **Supporting self-employment and home-based enterprise.** High levels of self-employment and home working are a distinctive feature of Wendron's economy. The NDP should therefore support forms of development that enable home-based businesses to operate effectively, including home offices, workshops, the conversion of outbuildings, and suitable live/work arrangements, where these can be accommodated without unacceptable impacts on residential amenity or rural character.
  - 4.4 **Improving digital and service infrastructure.** Poor broadband and mobile coverage were among the clearest concerns raised by businesses, alongside energy costs and limited EV charging provision. These issues are important to the productivity and sustainability of local businesses and should be recognised in the NDP where relevant to land use and development.
  - 4.5 **Supporting sustainable rural diversification.** Agriculture remains central to the Parish's economy, character and environmental stewardship. The NDP should therefore support well-designed and appropriately located diversification proposals that help sustain farming and other land-based enterprises, while safeguarding landscape character, heritage significance, biodiversity and residential amenity.
  - 4.6 **Managing tourism positively.** Tourism and leisure are important contributors to the local economy. However, the evidence also indicates the need to ensure that tourism growth remains proportionate and does not erode the qualities of landscape, tranquillity and local distinctiveness on which much of the Parish's appeal depends.
  - 4.7 **Supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy.** Businesses showed strong interest in renewable energy and future EV use. The NDP should therefore support appropriate forms of low-carbon infrastructure and energy efficiency improvements, where these are compatible with the character and sensitivity of the Parish.
  - 4.8 **Recognising the relationship between housing and the local economy.** The availability of affordable housing for staff was identified as an important factor by businesses. This underlines the need for the NDP to consider the relationship between local housing provision, workforce retention and the long-term vitality of the rural economy.
  - 4.9 Overall, the evidence indicates that Wendron Parish has a relatively diverse, skilled and resilient rural economy, but one that depends on protecting key employment assets, enabling small-scale enterprise, improving infrastructure, and supporting sustainable forms of diversification and low-carbon transition. These matters provide an important basis for the business and employment policies of the Neighbourhood Development Plan.
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## Appendix 1, Wendron NDP Local Business Survey Summary

As part of the evidence base for the Wendron Neighbourhood Development Plan, a business survey was undertaken to gain insight into the profile, needs and experiences of local businesses operating within the Parish.

A total of **10 businesses** responded to the survey. Exactly half were self-employed without staff, and half were business owners with employees. The sectors represented were varied, with the largest category being “other”, including businesses such as floristry, hospitality, conservation and community provision. Other sectors represented included the building trade, tourism, professional services and IT. Most businesses were well established, with half having operated in the Parish for more than ten years.

In terms of business size, half the respondents were sole traders. The remainder were small businesses employing up to 20 people. No respondents employed more than 20 staff.

Businesses identified a number of positive features of operating in Wendron Parish, including the peaceful rural setting, being part of a supportive community, access to countryside, and the ability to work flexible hours close to home. Half of respondents said there was nothing they particularly disliked about operating in the Parish. Those who did identify concerns referred to increasing business costs, poor internet connectivity, limited local spending power, and in one case access problems caused by the condition of a bridleway.

When asked to rank the local factors most important to business success, respondents placed greatest importance on local community support, local tourism, affordable housing for staff, not having to commute, transport links and digital communications. Access to skilled labour and proximity to customers were generally seen as less important.

All businesses rated Wendron as between 3 and 5 on a 5-point scale as a place to do business. Most businesses with premises said that they had enough space. However, among those operating from home, or likely to do so in future, improved broadband and mobile signal were seen as important, as was additional space for a home office or workshop.

Sustainability issues were also prominent. **Eighty per cent** of businesses said renewable energy provision was important to their future, and **50%** expected to introduce electric vehicles within the next five years, although no respondents currently offered EV charging facilities for staff or visitors.

Transport was not seen as a major operational constraint by most businesses, although some concerns were raised about road maintenance, narrow lanes and poor bridleway conditions. Public transport was regarded as less satisfactory, with a majority of respondents stating that it did not meet their business needs because of long walking distances to bus stops, weak connections to business premises, and service times that were unsuitable for staff and visitors.

Overall, the survey indicates that local businesses are generally positive about the Parish as a place to operate, but would benefit from better digital infrastructure, improved flexibility for home-based working, support for sustainability measures, and a planning framework that protects and enables suitable local employment.

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## Appendix 2, Business Types and Examples in Wendron Parish

The evidence base identifies a wide range of businesses operating in Wendron Parish, illustrating the diversity of the local economy. These include automotive services, engineering and manufacturing, construction and property-related businesses, hospitality and leisure enterprises, agricultural and animal-related businesses, retail and artisanal production, professional and technical services, health and wellbeing services, and community, heritage and cultural organisations.

Examples of **automotive services** include vehicle repair, maintenance, sales and specialist servicing businesses. Examples of **engineering, manufacturing and technology** businesses include firms involved in composite manufacturing, pump production, general engineering, automation systems, laser services, ventilation systems and stove installation.

The **construction, design and property** sector includes architectural design, building contractors, masonry and roofing, building preservation and conservation-related services. The **hospitality and leisure** sector includes holiday accommodation, pubs, eateries, glamping, leisure facilities and visitor attractions.

The **agricultural, animal services and environmental** sector includes poultry and dairy farming, animal sanctuary work, agricultural contracting, vegetable production, fisheries, equine and canine services, fencing, firewood supply, and waste management. The **retail and artisanal production** sector includes floristry, upholstery, surfboard production, metal art, lighting and culinary products.

The evidence also records a number of **professional, scientific and technical** businesses, including consultancies, ecological services, research and development, marine services, web-related services and media production. **Health and wellbeing** services include dental, massage and clinic-based provision. **Community, heritage and cultural** organisations include early years provision, heritage attractions, restoration trusts and leisure or conservation bodies.

This range of activity demonstrates that Wendron's economy is not dependent on a single sector. Instead, it comprises a mixed rural economy with a strong base in agriculture and land-based activity, supported by tourism, technical and professional services, creative enterprise, home working and small-scale industry. This diversity is an important strength and should be recognised in the NDP's approach to business and employment.

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