

An open letter to Mr Knuckey

This is a reply to the commentary on the downside of a Stadium for Cornwall recently appearing in the media on a regular basis emanating from a gentleman by the name of Jeff Knuckey.

As you single me out in your letters I thought I would take this opportunity to invite you to consider my point of view as to why I am committing large amounts of personal time and money to getting a stadium built in Truro. This is the culmination of a lifetime spent giving back to Cornish sport and music and I want to do all I can to make this dream become a reality.

I was born and grew up in Penzance and followed the Pirates avidly. Some terrific players and coaches taught me rugby and how to spin pass and screw kick a rugby ball from an early age.

My father was heavily involved with the Pirates but when he died my mother moved away. I went overseas after studying civil engineering at university due to a lack of opportunities in Cornwall.

As a result of my formative years learning about the game and the leadership qualities associated with the game I was very fortunate to have a very rewarding rugby career captaining Kenya and also East Africa. I was able to build my businesses on the back of my rugby career, in particular when cashflow became tight my local bank manager would come to my rescue just because I had a decent sidestep and a bit of pace but also I believe, integrity and arguably humility.

I never forgot where I learnt my rugby skills or how to behave in public – which was of course where I was born. I missed Cornwall and all the memories.

When I brought my family to Cornwall in the early 90s and cognisant of the part rugby had played in my business success I thought I should help my old rugby club get back on its feet. As a matter of record I also supported my former school with a significant donation for the Music department and athletics kit for the sports team going to the National finals.

It hasn't been plain sailing as you have pointed out in your various letters Jeff and I have been severely disappointed and angry at various times by mismanagement of my funds.

Nevertheless the good times and bonhomie derived from the time, effort and finance ploughed into the Pirates over the last 22 years outweigh the disappointments.

Consequently I am now committed to this 22 year effort to leave a legacy for the young people of Cornwall. This has become a mission for myself and a severe test of character with respect to staying power and supporting a worthy cause. It's no longer just about the Pirates, however without it the Pirates have no future.

This is now about all the lovely people of Cornwall who deserve an iconic location where they can enjoy top music events and sport in the company of their friends. It's about putting a smile onto faces when things appear bleak. It's about health improvements for all ages and most of all it's about an opportunity to improve your lifestyle, your fitness and enjoy doing it. It's about making Cornwall proud.

I can assure you the stadium will also attract businesses from outside Cornwall to the magnificent conferencing facilities – and like all visitors to our beautiful county they will definitely return. Cornwall is on a roll business wise as a result of technological improvements and this stadium is well overdue. What other conurbation of c. 500,000 people in England doesn't have a centrepiece stadium?

I have been working at getting this stadium built since 2006. The £2 million from the Pirates is coming from myself along with the £300,000 annual guarantee to ensure

STADCO remains solvent. We are also undertaking a Crowdfunding scheme to cover off the extra money requested by the council on top of the £6 million raised to date

To address some of the criticism, I can assure you that Carn Brea was considered as a possible location by the consultants Drivas Jonas in their report in 2007, these consultants being appointed jointly by the Council and Camborne Pool Redruth Urban Regeneration Company.

Finally the Cornish lads we have borrowed to boost our team have been excellent examples of the level of rugby talent available in Cornwall. Despite losing top local talent bred in Penzance such as England internationals Luke Cowan-Dickie and Jack Nowell to a very superior club, half of our squad are Cornish born and bred – and we are looking at a top six finish despite all the faults you have found – being in the top 18 clubs in the country ain't bad for a failed team.

I may never see the Pirates play in the Premiership but I am making every effort physically and financially to help get SPORTVA KERNOW built so I can die knowing I have played a fundamental role in leaving a legacy for the good people of a county I have proudly represented at a number of sports.

As Ian Botham so aptly put it “life is not a rehearsal” and I live by that code, we have one chance to make Cornwall proud so let's not miss this heaven sent opportunity, if we do the young people of Cornwall will never forgive us,

Richard Evans Kenya March 2018.