

# STATES OF JERSEY



## RURAL ECONOMY STRATEGY (P.112/2005): AMENDMENT

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Lodged au Greffe on 5th July 2005  
by the Connétable of St. Helier

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STATES GREFFE

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*At the end of paragraph (v) after the words “achievement of these standards” insert the words “which will include the provision of increased public access to the countryside”.*

CONNÉTABLE OF ST. HELIER

## REPORT

While there are several references to the desirability of improving public access to the countryside in the Committee's Report, I think that this should be a major plank of our future Rural Economy Strategy.

Despite some advances in recent years, such as the St. Lawrence Millennium Path, the Jersey countryside is not nearly as accessible as it could be. Walking opportunities are much richer in most parts of Europe, and not only do our visitors expect to find equal standards of public access to our countryside, but Islanders should be able to enjoy far more walking routes than currently exist.

The same is true of other active leisure pursuits which require greater access to the countryside that exists at present, including cycling and horse-riding. In Section 6.5.2, the Report notes that, "*The local horse industry is large with around 1,200-1,500 horses on the Island and an estimated consumer spend of £8.5 million not including stabling and grazing costs*", and there is no doubt that the experience of horse riding would be enhanced by the provision of more bridleways.

The health arguments for a more accessible countryside are particularly valid given current concerns about rising obesity levels.

This important objective is referred to a number of times in the opening section of Strategic Objectives, but it is not listed as a condition which will need to be met for Receipt of the Single Area Payment (Section 2.3.5), which "*will be conditional on compliance with the basic levels of Good Agricultural and Environmental Practices (e.g. Water Code, Animal Welfare codes, etc.) and the provision of basic financial data relating to production costs, overhead costs and market returns.*".

In Section 8, it is made explicit that agricultural subsidies will continue to be enjoyed by farmers and other rural business operators, so long as 'Basic Stewardship' is undertaken. 'Enhanced Stewardship' is explained in paragraph 8.3 as being funded through a 'Countryside Renewal Scheme' for which a sum of money has been set aside. I believe that this distinction will effectively relegate access to the countryside to a 'nice to have' category, competing for limited funds for the other examples of 'Enhanced Stewardship' listed by the Committee –

- Protect and enhance the visual attractiveness of the landscape.
- Protect and enhance biodiversity.
- Adopt further measures to reduce diffuse pollution.
- Develop less intensive farming systems.
- Adopt further measures to reduce diffuse pollution.

It is significant that in its conclusion to the Report (Section 14) the Committee does not include "*to promote access for all to the countryside*" as one of its key strategic objectives. I believe that greater access to Jersey's countryside should be a fundamental objective in any Rural Economy Strategy; it should be one of the 'standards for basic environmental performance of the agricultural industry' upon which the payment of agricultural subsidies are conditional.