

REVIEW OF THE BRIDGING ISLAND PLAN

In the context of the Covid-19 crisis and with the lack of a States agreed population and migration strategy there seems little alternative but to consider a shorter-term bridging plan (2020-2024) whilst the consequences of these elements become somewhat clearer. There is of course despite the uncertainties an absolute need for certain elements built into the normal Island Plan process to be moved forward with urgent action until such time that a full 10 year Plan, now proposed for 2025-2034 can be lodged and ratified.

If one considers the Government's five Strategic Priorities, the Economic Challenges resulting from Covid-19, the ever present Climate Change crisis and the need to move towards the island's agreed desire for Carbon Neutrality by 2030, heavily dependant upon a much more Sustainable Transport Policy for Jersey, then to identify key elements that might be examined and focused on for action more immediately is logical. Covid-19 has dramatically changed the landscape and raised a whole new range of challenges from coping with the financial costs of dealing with the on-going crisis to how the island plans the Recovery and what it might look like in this New World. There is, or at least there should be, a desire to "Build back Better" and any plan forward should out of necessity contain a "green tinge" and focus heavily on "local" as major elements.

To therefore capitalise on existing work to structure early delivery in key areas and to incorporate these into a Bridging Island Plan (B.I.P.) is sensible although the ability to move forward rapidly in many areas remains constrained by the current restrictions resulting from Covid-19 with public engagement, stakeholder engagement and States member involvement all presenting difficulties but this really should not be an excuse for doing nothing and simply delaying a Island Plan into the future when there might be a little more certainty in the longer-term island dynamics.

In this context the key identified priorities for action in the B.I.P. appear to be as follows:

Catalysing affordable and key worker housing with public land and delivery.

New coast, countryside and marine coastal protection.

Plan for Town (transport, public realm, density, height); prioritised framework for other urban centres.

Our Hospital and other major projects.

Place-making policies for distinctive urban areas.

I would have included other key elements in this initial phase such as a revised Mineral Strategy and Solid Waste Strategy for the island but perhaps the economic uncertainties brought about by Covid-19 and the possible impact on forward population might mitigate against this.

With my numerous voluntary personal involvements I have over recent months, largely remotely, been engaged in discussion which cover numerous aspects of the emerging B.I.P. Proposals. For clarity I give an indication below of the most relevant of these:

Jersey Product Promotions Ltd (Genuine and Farm Jersey) Hon Chair- Recovery Programme and Local.

Jersey National Park Hon Chair – General Environmental concerns, Historic Buildings and most certainly Park Boundaries with emphasis on both the terrestrial and the marine environment along with biodiversity and the importance of open space / nature for wellbeing.

Disability Partnership Hon Chair – St Helier public realm, movement strategy and parking.

Chamber of Commerce / Energy Forum Hon Chair of Chamber's Environment Sub Committee and Hon Chair of Energy Forum – As well as elements of the above Carbon Neutral Strategy, Sustainable Transport Plan and Active Travel Plan.

Inevitably with this width of participation time pressures for involvement have been immense and many elements of specific policies lap over each other and attempting to have input from sometimes different perspectives has been challenging but always has been attempted by balancing desirability with realism allowing for the current exceptional circumstances in which we find ourselves.

Below I pass further comment in what I hope is a balanced manner on what I understand to be the key elements to be proposed in the B.I.P. and onward into the next proposed full Island Plan (2025-2034).

Housing- I have little direct involvement here but the need to move quickly on enhancing the availability of affordable and key worker accommodation seems more than obvious.

Economic Development- As indicated a need for a green element to any recovery planning and a strong emphasis on all things local with built-in elements of sustainability is crucial. The island needs to look beyond financial and digital opportunities, important though they are, to take full advantage of our "natural capital". Shorter term decisions in this area need to be viewed in the context of much longer term economic development needs.

Climate Change- There is a need for urgency for the island to agree and implement a Carbon Neutral Strategy, to move as rapidly as possible towards our ratified objective of neutrality by 2030. If the proposed Citizen's Assembly to discuss and contribute to this is inordinately delayed then an alternative format needs creating to move things forward. Urgent action is required on coastal and indeed inland flood risks and a special strategy to limit carbon emissions.

Physical and Social Infrastructure- Without being drawn into the Our Hospital discussion (decide a location and get on with it if we can afford it) we do need some short term decisions on infrastructure requirements, Waterfront, Airport, Harbour etc whilst not closing out longer term options. In my view strategic questions like the provision of water, minerals and waste disposable need more urgent attention than seems predicated.

Natural Environment- From my perspective it is essential that the planning policy regime for both the coast and the countryside is updated as a matter of urgency. This is not to stop all development but to ensure that it is appropriate and balances conflicting interests. As an enabler to this and so the concept can move forward into a logical opportunity for the island the National Park boundaries certainly need redefining and stabilising which opens the opportunity for new policies such as those on biodiversity and the importance of open space not only for nature but for wellbeing and containing rising mental health issues.

Marine Environment- This needs rapidly resolving not only in the context of Brexit and the requirements of a new sustainable fisheries regime but also to seize the opportunity of creating a

new marine linked element to the National Park, something that will be essentially unique to the island and recognisable internationally as something “special”.

Historic Environment- The island is way behind most other jurisdictions in protecting both its terrestrial but also its marine historic environment and urgent action in enhancing Conservation Areas must be a priority.

Travel and Transport- A fast start to the proposals contained in the Sustainable Transport Policy is a simple opportunity as the island builds into Recovery with longer-term strategic changes to follow.

St Helier- With the rising demand for housing particularly affordable and for key workers paramount a short-term integrated plan for town is a must. This should indeed include housing regeneration whilst taking cognisance of public realm and movement, as well as protecting open space and street presentation (trees etc). All elements of design, standards and density and heights for clarity needs to form part of this.

Outside of Town- We do need to decide what is possible in other urban centres where housing development in particular is practical and to install policies and guidance to support this.

Thus when considering the foregoing and allowing for the current unusual circumstances I personally feel now is not the time for prevarication as there is a critical need for action and to wait for the ability to produce, consult on and ratify a full 10 year island plan would out of necessity miss the opportunity to seize many quick wins without compromising the longer term strategic view. It will obviously be a complicated short-term process to produce and secure agreement for a B.I.P. but an immense amount of the groundwork is already in place. Many of the critical elements of the emerging Plan have already been the subject of on-going workstreams where many of the issues and opportunities have already been exposed to stakeholders and interest groups and opinion has been garnered to synthesise into policy. A situation therefore where the mechanism is to run the public consultation process in parallel with consultation with States members, stakeholders and interest groups is essentially valid. Obviously discussion must not be curtailed or eliminated but with goodwill on the part of participants and innovative methods of communication we all can and must move the process on to a sensible conclusion in the interest of the island and its people.

I hope this submission proves of some use and interest to the Panel and I do of course remain available for further contact or to supply additional comment if required.

Jim Hopley.