

Shadow Scrutiny Investigation: The Jersey Agri-Environment Scheme

Submission by Mr. D O Griffis 6th June 2004

1 This submission is in response to an invitation from the Shadow Scrutiny Panel chaired by Senator Ted Vibert to comment on the Agri-Environment Scheme, based on the Panel's published terms of reference. I assume that I received this invitation because I was the Chief Executive Officer at the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries when the policies approved by the States, including the Agri-Environment Scheme (AES), were developed. I am pleased to comment because I believe that an AES of the kind approved by the States would be beneficial to Jersey and in the hope that the recommendations of the Scrutiny Panel will lead to early implementation. The Panel may wish to know that after receiving the invitation I had a brief telephone conversation with Rosemary Collier in which she updated me with regard to AES developments. She subsequently sent me a copy of the latest draft of the Scheme documentation.

2 The Panel's Terms of reference forwarded to me are as follows:

- i. To review the policies to safeguard and enhance the environment which was approved by the States on 25th and 26th July 2002 and subsequent related work undertaken to implement the policy.
- ii. To consider submissions to the Fundamental Spending Review in support of the scheme.
- iii. To make recommendations to the appropriate Committees.
- iv. To assess the consequences of non-implementation or partial implementation for the Island as a whole and the countryside in particular.

I will comment mainly on item i. (paragraphs 3 to 34) and more briefly on ii. and iv.

Item i. Review of the approved policies

Environmental concerns and policy trends in other countries

3 Protecting and enhancing the environment has become a major issue throughout the world, for reasons that will not be repeated here. It is clear that agriculture is one of the major influences on the natural environment and there has been increasing criticism of agricultural policies and practices that have affected the environment adversely. Over the past twenty to thirty years policies have consequently been developed by the governments of many countries to influence agricultural practices for environmental reasons. These policies have often taken the form of, or at least included, agri-environment schemes. This policy trend has coincided in Western Europe with the progressive downgrading of policies to provide direct financial support for agricultural production and increased emphasis on support for improved marketing of agricultural produce.

The nature of agri-environment schemes and their normal features

4 Agri-environment schemes of the kind seen today in many developed countries have their origins in the 1970s. It was perceived at that time that it was necessary for governments to influence farming practices in some geographical areas in order to prevent the destruction or gradual erosion by agriculture of environmental features that it was considered desirable to protect. It was also perceived that in order to influence farming practices it was essential to persuade farmers to change their practices and to gain their commitment to the environmental objectives. Legislation to forbid certain practices and to enforce others was, on the basis of experience, considered unlikely by itself to achieve the objectives.

5 Schemes were therefore designed, for defined areas of land, based on specific environmental objectives for those areas. In the light of these objectives, desirable and undesirable farming practices were identified. Farmers were then offered payments to encourage the desirable practices and to discourage the undesirable ones. The level of payment offered was calculated to largely offset the cost to the farmer of changing his farming practices or not adopting undesirable practices. This investment of public funding was judged to be acceptable because significant benefits were likely to be obtained for the wider community.

6 The Environmentally Sensitive Areas Scheme in the United Kingdom is an early example of a scheme of this kind. It was first applied in such areas as West Penwith and the Somerset Levels. Currently there are more than 20 such areas within the scheme in the UK, which is widely acknowledged to have been successful without incurring unduly high costs. Participation in the scheme is voluntary but uptake, which in effect meant entering into a land management contract, has nevertheless been sufficiently high to enable the Scheme objectives to be achieved. This success is partly attributable to the levels of payment, which farmers have generally judged to be sufficiently attractive, and partly to the way in which the scheme has been operated and developed - with encouragement of a high degree of participation from farmers and their representatives and from environmental groups.

Origin of the Jersey AES

7 The possibility of an AES for Jersey was not apparently given any consideration until the policies of the Agriculture and Fisheries Committee were reviewed in 2000-2001 (leading to the new policies proposed in the Policy Report 2001 which were approved by the States in July 2002). Awareness within the Island of such schemes was very low despite the fact that there were many groups active in Jersey with regard to various aspects of the environment. During the consultation process in Jersey that preceded the development of the Policy Report 2001 it became clear, however, that there was a high level of agreement that policies to protect and enhance the environment should feature prominently in the new policies for the agricultural industry in the Island. This was also encouraged in the report provided to the Agriculture and Fisheries Committee in 2001 by the consultancy organisation Oxford Policy Management. The Committee supported this emphasis and the new agricultural policies were developed accordingly, including the proposal that there should be a Jersey Agri-Environment Scheme.

8 In developing the aims and objectives for this Scheme and the principles on which it would be based, it was possible to take into account not only the opinions of individuals and organisations in Jersey but also information and experience from the range of schemes already in operation in Western Europe. Dr. Janet Dwyer, representing a leading environmental consultancy organisation based in the UK, provided advice and comment to the Committee while the Scheme was being drafted. This consultancy organisation has provided advice to governments in Western Europe on environmental issues and policies and Dr. Dwyer has detailed knowledge of a range of different agri-environment schemes. It became apparent from Dr. Dwyer's advice that policies to protect and enhance the environment by means of agri-environment schemes have already been included in policies for the agricultural industries throughout Western Europe. Jersey appeared to be unique in not having done so. All other countries in Western Europe had already implemented agri-environment schemes of one kind or another and some have existed for more than two decades.

Basis for reviewing the Jersey AES

9 The Scrutiny Panel will presumably consider **whether or not an agri-environment scheme should feature** in policies for the agricultural industry in Jersey; if so, the **priority** that this policy should be given, and whether the specific scheme proposed is appropriate i.e. the Scheme outlined in the Policy Report 2001 and subsequently approved by the States. The Panel will be able to consider the aims and objectives for the AES, as included in the Policy Report 2001. These referred to addressing the various issues concerning the environment affected by agriculture and to improving access to the countryside for the general public. The Panel will no doubt also wish to assess the costs of the Scheme in relation to the likely benefits, although the latter is inevitably difficult to quantify.

The Panel will also be able to consider the principles on which the Jersey AES has been based and on which it would operate. These principles are important and the discussion that took place about the AES before and after publication of the Policy Report 2001 focused on some of these principles.

Scheme principles

Participation is voluntary

10 Participation in the Scheme by farmers and growers would be entirely voluntary. (Note that it was also proposed that if a tenant farmer decided not to participate in the Scheme it would then be possible for his/her landlord to participate instead. It would not be possible for both a landlord and tenant to participate with regard to the same land. Tenant farmers would also need to obtain the agreement of their landlords to the inclusion in their plans of some of the measures, for example measures that would have a long-term effect on the landscape.)

Participants prepare a Plan by selecting environmental measures suitable to their farms and locality

11 A list of ‘options/measures’ would be available within the Scheme. Participants would be able to select from this list some of them for inclusion in an individual ‘Farm Environmental Plan’ which would subsequently be implemented. The measures would address the main environmental issues in the countryside of the Island including the appearance of the landscape, risks of pollution, wildlife protection and access by the public. It is emphasised that farmers would decide for themselves which measures to select. The States Committees and Departments would not prescribe the measures that individual farmers should include in their plans, but would *influence* implementation by maintaining, and regularly updating, the list of measures and by deciding the level of States funding available for these measures.

Role of a Scheme advisory group

12 The list of measures available to farmers would gradually be extended to ensure that all farmers have a reasonable choice of measures suitable for their farms. The list would be kept under review by an advisory group whose remit would be to advise the responsible committees about the future development of the Scheme. The advisory group would comprise representatives of at least some of the environmental groups active in the Island and representatives of the agricultural sectors. All decisions would, however, be taken by the responsible Committees. (I understand from Rosemary Collier that such a group now exists.)

States funding

13 The States would provide funding to contribute to the cost of implementing the measures selected; the level of this contribution (i.e. the proportion of the total cost of implementation) would vary between options according to their importance, taking into account advice from the advisory group and from States departments.

The AES is not a source of farm income

14 The AES would not be a means of enhancing farmers’ incomes/business profitability. It would not, as some critics have suggested, be a ‘back door’ method of enhancing business profitability. The new agricultural policies were designed to achieve a clear distinction between funding for the various purposes – income support; improvement in marketing; environmental protection and enhancement; provision of support services. The funding provided by the States through the AES would be for the specific measures selected for inclusion in the Farm Environmental Plan and the level of funding would normally be less than 100% of the cost to the farmer of implementation. Thus, participating farmers would normally make some contribution to the cost of implementation and so the normal effect on business profitability would be negative.

15 It is, however, important to note that payments to farmers would not be on the basis of the actual cost incurred by the farmer - because establishing actual costs would be administratively cumbersome and expensive. Instead payments would be on the basis of the typical or ‘standard’ cost

for implementing each of the measures, and this amount would be published in the Scheme documentation and updated periodically. Thus, farmers would know in advance exactly the amount he/she would receive from the States for each measure implemented. It follows that if a farmer then chose to implement a particular measure to an unnecessarily high standard the costs actually incurred might be well in excess of the standard cost. On the other hand, if a farmer managed to implement the measure to a satisfactory standard while incurring actual costs below the standard cost, he/she would gain some profit from implementation – but the amount of this profit would be small and it would not have a significant effect on business profitability. (The required minimum standard of implementation for each measure would be indicated in the Scheme documentation.)

Conditionality

16 The Policy Report 2001 proposed that the issue of supporting farmers' incomes/business profitability would be addressed through a totally separate policy (referred to in the Policy Report as Direct Financial Support and including area payments, headage payments and interest subsidies). ***To be eligible for Direct Financial Support farmers would need to participate in the AES.*** This principle is referred to in Jersey as 'conditionality'. In other countries it is sometimes referred to as 'cross-compliance'. Thus, farmers who did not wish to receive Direct Financial Support, or were ineligible for it (for example growers who did not grow any of the crops supported by area payments), would not be required to participate in the AES – but they could do so if they wished.

Scheme administration

17 Dr. Dwyer advised at an early stage of the risk of creating an unnecessary administrative burden and excessive overhead costs. The Jersey AES was therefore designed to minimise the administrative tasks and costs and Dr. Dwyer subsequently confirmed that the estimates made for the Jersey scheme were probably realistic.

18 The main administrative tasks are to maintain the Scheme (based on advice from the Scheme Advisory Group), to approve Farm Environmental Plans, to administer Scheme payments, to control the Scheme budget, to monitor the Scheme and to prepare reports of Scheme progress. Concerning approval of Farm Environmental Plans, they would be subjected to a simple administrative check to ensure that the measures adopted were 'appropriate' for the farm and the locality and that they were 'adequate' in scale (not just token) to justify payment of Direct Financial Support. Control of the Scheme budget would be straightforward because each farm would be allocated a maximum amount of funding each year, based on the farm area. Farmers could spend as much as they wished on environmental measures but they would receive payments only for those approved in the Farm Environmental Plans and limited to a maximum amount.

19 The level of monitoring needed for the Scheme was an issue between the Agriculture and Fisheries Department and environmental scientists in other departments. Agriculture and Fisheries took the view that monitoring should be 'lightweight' (based on performance indicators) and should be undertaken by a body independent of the States departments, probably by means of a contract. Others argued that more intense monitoring was needed, based on specific measurements of aspects of the environment.

20 The cost of administration, including provision for lightweight monitoring, was included in the budget for the Scheme and amounted to about £70000 per annum.

Reactions to the proposed Jersey Agri-Environment Scheme

21 After publication of the Policy Report 2001 it was apparent that there was widespread support for the AES, not just from the various environmental interests and groups in the Island, but also from individuals within the agricultural industry and from many individual members of the general public.

22 It should be noted, however, that there was some hostility to the Scheme from some farmers. I believe that the Panel needs to understand the basis for this hostility in order to have an accurate perspective on it. Some of it was clearly based on misunderstanding of the Scheme principles summarised above and this diminished as the principles were explained and discussed.

23 Some of the hostility can be understood by appreciating that all of the industry sectors were suffering financial stresses at the time and were pressing the Agriculture and Fisheries Committee and the Finance and Economics Committee concerning the need, as they saw it, for significantly increased direct financial support from the States. From the industry's viewpoint the introduction of an AES, worthwhile though its aims might be, was a distraction from the main issue. The AES was also perceived to be a threat because of the possibility, as they saw it, that funding would be diverted to it from Direct Financial Support or Support for Marketing. This attitude and suspicion was understandable bearing in mind the significant decline in the real level of direct financial support over the previous decade and the significant real decline in the total budget for Agriculture and Fisheries which had led to dissatisfaction with some of the services provided by the Department.

24 Some farmers (a minority) objected initially to the proposal that they should contribute to the cost of implementing the selected measures, but the majority view seemed to be that this was acceptable. It was generally appreciated that most if not all of the measures that could be selected within the Scheme were improvements that farmers would wish to undertake in any case, and it was obviously an advantage to have financial support from the States towards the cost.

25 Some of the hostility was, however, to certain of the Scheme principles – mainly to conditionality. I will refer briefly and separately to the attitudes of the growers (represented by the Jersey Farmers' Union) and the dairy farmers (represented by the Royal Jersey Agriculture and Horticulture Society) – because the leaders of these two groups tended to have different attitudes on these and other issues.

26 The leaders of the growers were generally content that there would be an AES based on the above principles – provided that the necessary extra funding for the AES was made available by the States and was not diverted from other policies, particularly Direct Financial Support and Support for Marketing. (It should be noted in this context that the President of the Agriculture and Fisheries Committee gave his assurance repeatedly that he would not agree to implementation of the AES unless the necessary funding for it was provided by the States.) The leaders of the growers had hoped that the level of Direct Financial Support for growers would be increased much more than the Policy Report actually proposed. They were disappointed about this and by the fact that the level of funding proposed for the AES was much greater than the extra funding proposed as Direct Financial Support for growers.

27 Some individual growers argued for a time that an AES was unnecessary because the supermarkets now impose their own environmental standards on growers, and these were sufficient for Jersey. This line of argument does not stand up to scrutiny. The supermarket protocols are concerned with product quality and with maintaining the supermarkets' image with their customers vis a vis environmental issues. They are not intended to address the specific issues involved in protecting or enhancing the environment in Jersey; nor do the supermarkets make a financial contribution to the costs borne by farmers in achieving the protocol standards - whereas the AES would make a very significant contribution. The supermarkets require suppliers to meet their standards at their own expense and as a condition of accepting produce for sale. In addition the supermarkets are, according to persistent media reports, actually charging suppliers for shelf space.

28 The leaders of the dairy farmers objected more generally to the Scheme, describing it as "prescriptive". This criticism was not that farmers would be instructed in detail what they should do on their farms (a criticism that would have been simply inaccurate) but that farmers would be obliged to participate in the Scheme if they wished to receive Direct Financial Support (which is accurate). This was an objection to the principle of conditionality. It appeared that the leaders of the

dairy farmers were arguing for increased Direct Financial Support and for financial support for their industry for marketing (both of which were actually proposed in the Policy Report 2001), but objected to the principle that, in return, dairy farmers should commit themselves to implementing measures to protect and enhance the environment. They argued, however, that dairy farmers did indeed also need increased support funding for environmental purposes - for example, to help them increase their storage capacity for slurry – but that this should be funded separately from the AES. I am not aware that any logical argument was advanced for this piecemeal approach to funding. It was also argued that the AES would be ‘bureaucratic’ and this line of criticism continued despite information being provided concerning the low level of resources that would actually be needed for Scheme administration and monitoring.

29 It needs to be recognised, however, that many dairy farmers positively supported the AES. Many said so privately and at a particular meeting of a group of leading dairy farmers it was said by them that they “had no problem” with the proposed AES. In my experience the great majority of farmers and growers, of all kinds, are enthusiastic about protecting and enhancing the environment. It has often been said that the countryside is beautiful because of farming activity, not despite it. As far as their time and financial resources allow most farmers and growers will willingly take actions to maintain and improve the environment. But, for most farmers and growers, their time and financial resources are so stretched that they do not actually take many of the actions that they would like to. Earning a living has to come first. Experience in other countries shows that the provision of some extra resources by means of an agri-environment scheme can enable positive actions to be taken with regard to the environment. In common with most other people, however, farmers need some incentive to take actions that will not benefit them financially. Legislation to punish polluters is an incentive and has a part to play, but methods of encouraging and contributing to the cost of positive actions, such as agri-environment schemes are also incentives and also have a part to play. Experience in many countries shows that a combination of ‘stick and carrot’ is far more effective than either approach separately.

30 Conditionality is a fundamental principle in the AES and would be a strong incentive to participation. It would, because of the very great importance of Direct Financial Support, (particularly for dairy farmers) ensure a very high level of participation in the Scheme by farmers. This in turn would ensure that the benefits of the Scheme would soon be perceived - bearing in mind that more than 50% of the Island’s land is subject to agricultural practices. Conditionality could be considered to be the ‘deal’ with the Jersey taxpayer, whereby the taxpayer agrees to continue Direct Financial Support and other support policies and, as their part of the deal, farmers agree to implement measures designed to safeguard and enhance the environment. This is an important argument in gaining acceptance from the public and the States for continuing support for the Island’s farmers and growers.

31 In my recent telephone conversation with Rosemary Collier she said that she believed that the principle of conditionality had been dropped. I am surprised if this is in fact the case. Conditionality is a fundamental principle of the policy approved by the States in July 2002 and is entirely consistent with the ‘conditions’ applied in many other schemes across Europe. My understanding (based on advice received concerning the Committee’s powers to change its policies without reference to the States) is that the Committee would need to take any significant policy change back to the States for approval – particularly if farmers would be affected financially, positively or negatively, by the policy change (which would certainly be the case in this instance). To my knowledge the issue of conditionality has not been taken back to the States.

32 In this context it should be noted also that during the development of the new agricultural policies the Policy and Resources Department indicated that it would be necessary at some stage for the new policies as a whole to be forwarded to the EU Commission for comment – to allow Brussels to comment on Jersey policies that might conflict with EU trade or agricultural policies. If this were done on the basis of the Policy Report 2001 then, in my opinion, Jersey would have nothing to fear from EU comment – because the policies contained in the Policy Report 2001 are consistent with

policies adopted within the European Union, including agri-environmental policies. In my opinion Jersey's policies would invite adverse comment from Brussels if they did not include a significant emphasis on agri-environmental policies and some degree of conditionality with regard to eligibility for other forms of agricultural support.

33 My conclusions concerning the agri-environment policy approved by the States are

1. The policy itself, based as it is on sensible principles, is sound and is an integral part of the balanced agricultural policies approved by the States.
2. The policy is appropriate for Jersey and is unlikely to attract negative comment from Brussels.
3. Conditionality is a fundamentally important principle and should be retained.

34 The terms of reference also refer to "subsequent related work undertaken to implement the policy". I am not aware of any significant work undertaken actually to implement the policy and this was confirmed in my telephone conversation with Rosemary Collier. Indeed I would be surprised if any implementation has taken place in the absence of the necessary extra funding. After the States approved the new policies in July 2002 I instructed that preparatory work towards implementation be continued despite the fact that actual implementation would have to await the extra funding. It was obviously necessary for this preparatory work to continue, albeit at a slower pace, in order that the Department would be ready for implementation whenever the extra funding became available. I have glanced through the latest draft documentation, which includes administrative procedures, and it is apparent that further progress has been made. In my opinion it should be possible to finalise the preparatory work and Scheme documentation in a matter of weeks, if that were given sufficient priority. Implementation could then go ahead very soon after funding became available, having allowed sufficient time for consultation.

Item ii. Submissions to the Fundamental Spending Review in support of the Scheme

35 I have not seen the submissions so cannot comment on them. I would like, however, to comment more generally on the funding requirements for a policy of this kind and the prospects for obtaining this funding.

36 The cost of an agri-environment scheme depends on the ambitions of the scheme. The original budgets for the Jersey AES included provision for tackling the two main threats to the environment from agriculture, namely nitrate levels in water and the risk of water pollution accidents from slurry stores. The measures proposed are a payment to growers who commit themselves to reduce nitrate fertiliser applications to Jersey Royals to a defined level and payments to dairy farmers related to the installation by them of additional slurry storage capacity. Tackling these two issues is relatively expensive and resulted in a projected total cost for the Scheme, when fully operational, of £1.7m per annum initially. This cost could decline in later years because the slurry store work would be completed and would not need to be repeated. The cost of addressing the nitrate issue would, however, need to continue for several years, until nitrate levels in water had declined to more acceptable levels. If it were decided not to tackle these two issues through the AES, the annual budget for the Scheme could be less than £1m. The two main issues would remain, however, and it should not be imagined that they can be tackled less expensively by other means.

37 It is not easy to convince sceptics about the need for an AES because the benefits from a scheme are not all immediately visible, they cannot be guaranteed in advance and not all the benefits will be achieved in the early years (for example, nitrate levels in water). Scepticism is not unique to Jersey, but governments elsewhere have faced the same uncertainties and they have been persuaded that the projected benefits are likely to be achieved and are worth pursuing.

38 It can hardly be argued that Jersey cannot afford an AES since Jersey has a relatively high per capita income. It is simply that an AES and other environmental policies have so far been given lower priority than other spending. It is not easy to make the case for an AES in debates about priorities for States spending. There are many competing needs and it appears from experience that environmental policies (and many other worthwhile policies in other fields) are always likely to lose to education, health, social security etc. The methods used in recent years to decide priorities have, predictably, transferred funding from Agriculture and Fisheries and several other committees to the 'social' policies. In my opinion those methods were flawed because they did not challenge spending policies (of all committees) adequately. It is to be hoped that the Fundamental Spending Review will be more successful but I am not optimistic about this 'blanket' approach to reducing public spending and changing priorities.

39 Unless the argument about priorities can be won (which seems unlikely) the best hope of funding for the AES would appear to be from achieving significant savings in the total States budget. There is clearly, and rightly, concern about the total level of States spending, which critics say has 'grown like topsy' as a consequence of the success of the finance sector in Jersey. Critics argue that there is abundant scope for budget reductions, but the methods so far employed to identify and achieve the savings are not robust enough to produce the necessary results. In my opinion the total States budget could be reduced significantly, with relatively little loss or inconvenience to the public. The savings would pay for the AES and many other deserving causes.

40 As a Jersey taxpayer, and as a supporter of sensible environmental policies, I believe this is an urgent matter. In my opinion the best way forward would be for Scrutiny Panels to be given powers and resources similar to those available to select committees in the UK. The Panels need to be able to make a difference and this requires in-depth and authoritative assessments of the *need* for policies (in all areas of government), the necessary *level of provision* for approved policies, and the *cost-effectiveness of provision*.

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Item iii. Recommendations to the responsible committees

41 This is clearly a matter for the Scrutiny Panel to decide. My hope is that the Panel will include in its recommendations that an AES, based on the principles already approved by the States, will be implemented without further delay.

Item iv. Consequences of non-implementation or partial implementation for the Island as a whole and the countryside in particular.

42 Non implementation would mean that Jersey would remain unique in Western Europe in this respect. Outsiders would be puzzled about this because the arguments in support of agri-environment schemes apply as much in Jersey as in the other countries of Western Europe whose governments have been persuaded by them. In the event of the Island's agricultural policies being considered in Brussels there would, as things stand, be a risk of negative comment on environmental issues.

43 Non-implementation would almost certainly mean that the two main risks of water pollution from agricultural sources, from the application of nitrate fertilisers to the Jersey Royal crop and from disposal of slurry from dairy cows, would not be tackled. The level of nitrate in the domestic water supply, which some authorities consider is already too high, would probably not reduce. It is very unlikely indeed that potato growers would voluntarily reduce the amount of fertiliser applied, because this would risk reduced yields and revenue. Payments under the AES would aim to offset a significant part of the loss of revenue. The cost to dairy farmers of increasing slurry storage capacity and associated works is high. Bearing in mind the recent low profitability of milk production, very few dairy farmers would have the financial resources for this investment or would wish to increase

business debt for this purpose.

44 Non-implementation would also mean that measures to protect and enhance the environment – concerning the landscape, protection of wildlife and improving access for the general public – would either not be implemented, or would be implemented at a much slower pace than would be achieved with the support of the AES. The consequences would be a gradual deterioration in environmental standards in the countryside. The environmental groups in the Island already describe deterioration that has already taken place. The inhabitants of Jersey and future generations deserve better.

45 Partial implementation would obviously be better than non-implementation with regard to tackling environmental issues. Partial implementation would reduce the cost of the Scheme, but it would also mean that the scale on which environmental measures would be adopted would be reduced. Since the major costs of the Scheme as proposed would be associated with reducing nitrate fertiliser applications and increasing slurry storage capacity, the obvious way of reducing the cost of the scheme would be for these measures not to be available within the Scheme. This would reduce the cost of the Scheme to less than £1m per annum. This approach would mean that participation in the Scheme would still be possible for all farmers who wished to participate. This is obviously important for farmers - on the assumption that conditionality is retained with regard to Direct Financial Support. It is also important in ensuring that environmental measures are implemented over most agricultural land.

Concluding comments

46 When I arrived in Jersey in June 2000 it is fair to say that awareness in Jersey of agri-environment schemes was very low and the subject was not on any agendas. Some of the Agriculture and Fisheries Committee's policies were addressing some environmental issues, but on a piecemeal basis and the main issues were not being addressed. Other committees were also addressing environmental issues, but not with regard to farming practices. It is gratifying, therefore, that there is now a much higher level of awareness of the part that agri-environmental schemes can play in protecting and enhancing the environment. It is also gratifying that, as part of the new agricultural policies approved by the States in July 2002, there is States support for a Jersey AES. But it is also very disappointing that no additional funding has been provided for it to date (or for the other agricultural policies approved at the time).

47 The importance of protecting and enhancing the environment in Jersey is very widely accepted, but this has not so far persuaded the States to provide adequate funding for the purpose. With regard to the merits and potential from the AES perhaps arrangements should be made for States members to visit and assess other countries nearby where such schemes have long been accepted. Dr. Dwyer could no doubt organise such a visit.

48 Thank you for the opportunity to comment and I sincerely hope that the outcome of the Panel's deliberations will be in the long-term interests of Jersey and its inhabitants.