

FAO

Deputy Kirsten Morel

Retail Review – Request for Written Submission from St Peters Garden Centre

Further to your letter of the 11th of September re the key challenges and opportunities facing retailers on the Island, I submit the following thoughts.

As a career retailer of some 40 plus years, equally split between the UK and Jersey, the majority of the retail issues identified as a challenge to the island retailers in 2018 and beyond, are not new.

They were / are: Car Parking, Sunday Trading, Christmas lights, lack of Government support / interest in the sector, high rental rates and wages. I repeat, nothing new, same old, same old.

In other words, there are no quick fixes to age old issues. This Retail Review needs to drive out achievable action plans, requiring a serious input from the States of Jersey. I would suggest that the Retailers have done so for years.

The submission from the Jersey Retail Association, of which I am a member, covers all of the above challenges, and I have little to add other than the following:

Employment Rates.

Extract from the JRA scrutiny submission

“The JRA reports that the retail sector lost 37% of staffing licences in the last 6months, and the Hospitality industry lost just 5%.”

Until recently the vacancy numbers advertised on the retail section of Gov.je / Jobs were always well, well below the current 60 to 80 now advertised on a daily basis. Retail employers are now finding themselves back in the late 90's early 2000's when they were trying and failing to recruit staff in the face of the Finance industry. Then, retailers were hindered by being unable to match the salaries on offer for basic Finance roles. Currently retailers are failing to recruit staff due to the reduction in licences, and retain those they have. Retailers who can afford, and some of those who cannot afford, are now offering “silly and potentially business damaging” rates of pay to provide a minimal level of service at best.

In September 2016 the centre following consultation with the relevant department, I was advised that there would be a gradual reduction in the number of our registered licences. At that time we had 17 covering the centre and the Bay Tree restaurant. I agreed that we did not need so many and was happy to see a gradual reduction. I was then informed in November 2016 that our registered numbers commencing 2017, would be 6!!! Not so much gradual as slashed. The Bay Tree Restaurant had 6 registered members of staff already in situ, leaving the centre with no room to manoeuvre. Consultation had clearly been a waste of time, falling on deaf ears. The Restaurant was and is in the Hospitality industry regarding employment. The centre is retail. The JRA report highlights the anomaly of licence reductions between the 2 sectors. Retail is as much seasonal as the hospitality industry, but we are not allowed registered seasonal staff after the 31st of October. All major retailers such as the centre, have a requirement for seasonal staff to cover the very busy and crucially important Christmas trading period. The issuing of licences, permanent and seasonal needs reviewing, and it needs to be transparent in how the apportioning of licences are decided.

It's only retail not that, important.

Retail Tax

“Guernsey have one, copy it “was the instruction given to the Comptroller of Tax by the states assembly. No Consultation. The Law was passed by one vote, with a member absent due to urgent private business!!! He later said had he been there he would have voted against it. YCNMIU

This tax will effect a number of large retail space retailers, many of whom have invested Millions of Pounds on providing the Island of Jersey with a retail offer and shopping environment that you will not find in a similar sized town the UK. De Gruchy, Romerills, Voisins, St Peters Garden Centre , Ransoms, are a credit to the Island. All are being heavily Penalised for being local and for investing in their business and Jersey.

Registered Licence allocation numbers should be reviewed favourably for those retailers who will be on the receiving end of this Tax

Reduction in licences, , Retail Tax, # It's only retail, not that important.

Parking

The JRA report suggesting a change of use of existing car parks is a drop in the ocean to what is required.

As there is little chance of Park and Ride being introduced, or used by many if introduced. The obvious solution to meet the need of both car owners and customers of ANY town business, is for the states to build “modern, multi storey , car parks as near to town as possible. Why have they not been factored into the waterfront plan for the high rise finance buildings? Build two and disguise them as a States Financial building, amongst the other finance buildings. User pays, and the States have a guaranteed income stream. The problem is not going to go away, it never does.

“Build them and they will come “

As an “out of town retailer” I was asked to comment on 8 specific questions. However most of them are relevant to all retail outlets in Jersey in or out of “Town “ and have been answered either by the JRA submission and commented on by this submission.