

STATES OF JERSEY



STATES STRATEGIC PLAN 2005 TO 2010 (P.81/2004): THIRD AMENDMENT

**Lodged au Greffe on 8th June 2004
by Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier**

STATES GREFFE

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At the end of the proposition, after the words “of the Appendix” insert the words –

“except that for the figure ‘1%’ (referring to the target for growth of the working population) on pages 5, 7, 10, 16 and in Table 2.1 of the said Appendix there shall be substituted the figure ‘0.25%’ ”.

DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER

REPORT

In considering this amendment, the first question that needs to be addressed is what the figure “1%” actually means in real terms. On the surface such a figure for growth in working population appears to be a modest one. But the reality is markedly different. With a working population of around 52,000, this 1% translates to some 500 additional workers year on year over the 5-year plan.

This figure has come to the fore as a result of the Fiscal plan to deal with the consequences of the zero/ten proposals soon to be put before the States by the Finance and Economics Committee. A part of that strategy is a growth target for the economy of “at least 2%” in order to raise an additional £20 million in tax revenue.

This target is, in my opinion, completely unsustainable. It fits almost exactly one of the definitions of unsustainable development set out in the Report “Jersey into the Millennium – a sustainable future” of December 2001 as follows –

Unsustainable Development:

“Treats the economy, society and the environment as three separate issues, and assumes that a healthy economy will automatically lead to a healthy and secure environment”.

The plan before us today is the economic (and fiscal) tail wagging the social and environmental dog.

Members will recall that following the publication of ‘Jersey into the Millennium’, in the debate on immigration in 2002, the proposal to allow an annual increase in inward migration of up to 200 was rejected by this Assembly.

The President of the Policy and Resources Committee today proposes, not 200, but an additional 500 workers for the Island workforce. He proposes no justification for this massive increase. There are no hard and fast protections built into this plan to prevent damage to the social and environmental infrastructure of the Island that this increase will inevitably bring. Nor are there any additional factors since 2002 apart from the need to raise more tax to plug the “black hole” that is zero/ten. It does not take a rocket scientist to assess that the proposed rate of population growth is simply not sustainable. Members should bear in mind that the figure refers to working population not total immigration including dependants. This figure will be far higher.

Figures from the 2001 Census for the 5 years from 1996 reveal that 3,152 households had been set up by “recent arrivals” over this period. The total number of people, including partners and dependants in these “recently arrived” households was nearly 10,000.

This “go for growth” or “business as usual” policy will undoubtedly cause increased pressure on our infrastructure. This is acknowledged throughout the plan but nowhere more so than the first item after the population growth is outlined in Table 2.1 –

“Make sufficient investment in the development and maintenance of the Island’s infrastructure to sustain population growth”.

The question is, how much will this additional investment be? In a situation where there are critical limits after which infrastructures simply cannot cope, I believe these extra costs will be far greater than the £20 million extra revenue produced.

The whole of Section 4 is an attempt to compensate for the additional population burden, in terms of habitat, pollution, landscape and environment both country and urban. All will suffer. I shall focus here on one aspect of this pressure where there are some details, namely Housing, to illustrate the flaws in this plan.

On Page 7 the proposition states the aim of –

“an increase in the housing stock of no more than 1,750 units. This is achievable through a review of the current Planning procedures and the Island Plan to investigate more efficient use of urban areas and to

encourage the regeneration of land;”.

Further on, under consequences, we find –

“House prices remain relatively stable as increased supply matches growing demand”.

There are 2 points to be made here. Firstly “the more efficient use of urban areas” – what does that mean? I suggest it means more high-density estates in urban areas on brownfield sites, destined to become tomorrow’s urban blight.

The concept of “increased supply” has also to be questioned. How does the proposal for 1,750 units of accommodation compare with recent years? The answer is that over the years 1999-2003 the total housing stock (public sector, first-time and private) increased by 2,707 new units. Rather than increasing the supply of housing to cater for the additional 500 high-earning immigrant workers, this plan proposes a reduction in building of up to 40%. The figures simply do not add up.

I am convinced that the target of 500 additional workers is both unsustainable and unrealistic. I hope members will take the revised figure of 0.25% as what it is intended to be, a compromise figure. It is neither the old figure of zero growth and is a substantial reduction from the figure proposed by the Policy and Resources Committee. However I believe it is sustainable in a real sense, and above all practical.

There are no financial or manpower implications arising from this amendment.