

26th September 2018

FAO Economic Affairs Scrutiny Panel
Scrutiny Office
Moriel House
Halkett Place
St Helier
JE1 1DD

Dear Economic Affairs Scrutiny Panel

Retail Review

Further to your letter dated 4th September we are pleased to provide the response from Jersey Business below.

Background

Our response is deliberately focused at a longer term strategic level given both government and bodies such as the JHA are better placed to articulate the current Retail environment and relevant data.

Crucially we feel there is an imperative for any future Retail strategy to take account of the wider economic, social and structural factors that are causing such a shift in how we shop and how we spend our leisure time. Based on this our comments are therefore focused on some of the broader areas which we feel need to form part of any future Jersey plan.

Current Retail Environment to be factored in:

- We are moving inexorably from the high street being the place where you went to shop, to the place you go to for a whole retail experience.
- Where the internet is more convenient and there is no need or desire to 'touch/ feel or experience' the product before purchase, then this part of the retail economy is best served via the internet.
- We continue to see a shift in the main St Helier retail areas between what is considered primary and secondary sites, with some locations on the edge of 'town' struggling for footfall.
- The markets remain an iconic buildings, which continues to be a draw from both local and tourist shoppers alike.
- If you currently walk through town at 5.30pm you have footfall walking across town but very little to encourage them to stay and chat with friends/ colleagues over a coffee etc.
- As we see new office accommodation coming on stream we also see older town centre office accommodation being converted into residential with supporting infrastructure i.e. local shops and cafes.

- We are blessed with some vibrant out of town areas but need to continue to invest and plan for the long term and also the changes in what the public/ tourists want from these locations.
- Retail and the resultant customer 'experience' is vital for the success and growth of our visitor economy with both sectors providing sustainable jobs/ careers and a more diverse economy

Considerations for future Retail plan:

- The main aim has to be to get more of the 106,000 of us coming into town more often not just when we have a purchase to make, but for the experience. If we do that the locations will be equally attractive to tourists which likewise will help grow the tourism economy as well.
- Where high streets are able to focus on the whole retail experience they are able to win back customers, this can be al fresco areas, car free streets (but with easy nearby parking), public entertainment/ events.
- We need to look at our 'secondary' retail sites to assess what the 'experience' offers and also if there is some way to encourage new operators to take up vacant units (ie short term financial incentive/ reduced rental, whilst they prove their retail concept).
- Are we able to invest in our markets to create more 'Retail Theatre' e.g. could we say on Saturday enable the surrounding roads to close to cars so we could encourage the establishment of an outdoor market to promote local Jersey produce, food etc to supplement the existing indoor market?
- Whilst it a positive to see Jersey surplus office accommodation being converted into residential, this needs to be balanced with green space as well, as this contributes to the quality of life for residents 'in town'.
- Traffic flows, car parking and support for more healthy methods of transport also need to feature in any long-term strategy.
- As such planning has a key role to play in developing the right ecostructure.
- Once we have that vibrant retail atmosphere, initiatives such as 'late night Thursday' will have a much greater chance of success and then units that are only really used 8.30am till 5pm on Mon- Saturday can be used much more efficiently for longer hours.

Can we learn from best practice elsewhere?


- If we look at the UK we can see the way some town high streets have reinvented themselves through greater pedestrianization and encouraging new local retailers to areas previously vacant.
- In France, we often see local brands/ outlets alongside the larger multiples, creating much more atmosphere than we see in the traditional UK High Street.
- In terms of markets Jersey can learn a lot from the likes of Borough market in London and Bury market near Manchester. Re the latter, through the success of the market

(coach tours travel from all over the north of England)
the whole town centre has grown and it is now the third major retail centre in the north.

- City centre living- Historically Manchester city centre was deteriorating as a retail centre and after 5pm (i.e. the end of the work day) it became a ghost town and not safe. Following the IRA bombing the city rebuilt it's retail proposition but also started to encourage residential back into the city and nearby areas. With conversion of former offices/ warehouses into residential this started to bring back life to the city, which is now vibrant from 8 till late. This required long term vision from the political and private sector leaders who invested in a long-term plan.
- We should also look at some of the joined up thinking that is evident in a number of cities across Europe as far as traffic congestion and promotion of alternative transport methods are concerned (bus, electric, cycle, walking etc.)

We trust the above assists in your deliberations and would be happy to discuss these with you further if that helps the panel in their deliberations.

Regards



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