

Sustainable Population

The first question surely must be, 'Have we reached the position that is currently sustainable?'

Since I retired 3 years ago my wife and I have travelled to many places and enjoyed the hospitality and culture of all of the places visited. We found the people of these countries happy and very caring for each other. Although some of the places have little to be happy about they genuinely seemed to care for one another and were very positive in their outlook. Also in all places the people were proud of their country.

When we return to our island it sometimes can be a very depressing time due to the fact for many years now, and I say this as a proud islander, there does not appear to me to be any corporate feeling in Jersey anymore. You only have to read the JEP for a couple of days and that feeling of 'nothing changes' engulfs you.

When you walk around the town, in shops, pubs etc, the feeling that Jersey is a special place to live is not as vibrant as it used to be. I speak to many people be they Islanders or people who have moved to the island to work and live, and when I speak it is mainly in a social manner but now that I do a little volunteer work I also speak to people in a 'work/advice' environment.

I know there are real pressures in our island and for probably the first time in many many years there is real pressure and fear that we are about to go through a very tough time without really knowing how we will come out of this in a positive manner.

The very rich may suffer some losses but in many ways they appear to be unconcerned due to the fact that they will have the means to counteract whatever negative issues might come their way. While the other half and I include the middle income bracket in this are deeply concerned as to how they are going to sustain their current lifestyles. Many have already suffered serious changes to their lives and I just wonder sometimes if politicians realise what is actually going on in our small community.

Jersey remains a good place to live even though certain politicians are wittingly or unwittingly trying to upset what we have. Surely our politicians are supposed to set examples and behave in a reasonably concordant manner. At the moment they certainly are not doing so and should really start to consider how unsettling the behaviour of a number of our elected politicians seriously affects the lives of Jersey residents.

To sustain our position in this changing world and maintain what we have the island does need to look forward and in many ways probably do things in many new and different ways. I do not know what these 'things' are but what they must do is carry the public along with them and when any thing new is introduced we need to ensure we can sustain them within our limited budgets.

One of the most important and critical areas we need to sustain in our very small island is SPACE, enough space in order to breathe and enjoy what is left of our beautiful island. Without space people become to feel that there is nowhere for them

to go, especially those who cannot afford to continually leave the island for holidays or even business.

People who have visited Jersey after only a five to ten years absence cannot believe how much new development has sprung up during this time. Those of us who live here see this happening in a gradual process and do not fully appreciate the impact of the buildings that are going up.

When Hue Court was built the views were superb as you could see across the whole of the Bay of St. Aubin and also had views over the town. Now one can see only a small patch of sea near Noirmont Point. I am just trying to emphasise what enormous building developments has been created in less than 20 years and especially during the last 10.

Buildings do cram people in and those living in St.Helier must feel trapped at times which goes to the beginning of this letter concerning people being happy. There are not many large areas of space left in Jersey so we must be very careful to sustain what we have.

If we increase our population we will need to build more accommodation, schools, hospital facilities etc. I do know a number of teachers working in our States Schools and I hear that class room numbers in certain schools are increasing which will cause teachers further stress and possible lowering of standards. The Hospital which I know offers a good service, is considering lowering the bed numbers as staffing and budget issues are becoming a deep concern. According to the media the public sector is insufficiently staffed with certain departments struggling to maintain the status quo. If you travel on our roads many of them are in a bad state of repair: the transport service available to country parishes is desperately woeful, especially during the long dark and gray months of winter.

I could go on and on and I have not mentioned housing issues but what I am trying to demonstrate is currently we are already struggling to sustain our current population numbers. It does not need the 'brain of Britain' to imagine what it would be like if our population levels were to grow much higher than we are at present.

In summary, I realise that in order to stay still we need to go forward and I would encourage and would expect our politicians to be forward thinking. I do not believe anyone has the 'golden answer' to sustainability and it so difficult to please everyone but whatever we do in or island we must do it together, difficult I know, but we must do it without compromising what we have left of the good things in Jersey.

Thank you

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