

COUNCIL FOR THE PROTECTION OF JERSEY'S HERITAGE



Council for the Protection of Jersey's Heritage Response to Public Call for Evidence by the Environment, Housing and Technical Services Scrutiny Panel on Environmental Policies

General

The development of sound policy for strategic government planning must always rely on the use of accurate information and data. Repeated recommendations by the Council for the measurement of the annual rate at which the amount of undeveloped land in Jersey is being lost to house building and other development, and for a Policy for landscape protection to be included in the Jersey Island Plan were both ignored by the previous Minister for Planning and Environment. The best planning data provided in Jersey in Figures (JIF), produced by the Statistics Unit appear to be out-of-date. For example, figures for 2007 showing that Jersey's land cover by the built environment was 24% and that land under cultivation was 54%. Both these figures remain unchanged in the 2012 edition, in spite of the fact that a significant number of green fields in various parts of the Island have been given over to housing development.

It should be a matter of concern to the Scrutiny Panel that reliable, up-to-date data is not available to provide a sound basis for long-term, strategic planning for the environment. The Panel should also note that the comparative figure for land covered by development in mainland UK is less than 10%, which is still a matter of concern to The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England. (CPRE).

Sustainable Development

The revised Jersey Island Plan 2011 is the key document describing policies for the protection of all aspects of the environment, natural, built and historic, including archaeology. Strategically it should therefore include all planning policies needed to provide for development which is shown to be sustainable.

Sustainable development is defined by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) as:

“Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”

It is suggested that in order to develop policies to achieve conditions of Sustainable Development in Jersey the Scrutiny Panel should address the following inter-related set of issues:

Conditions for Sustainable Development

Environmental

Bearing in mind that the greatest threat to the environment, including global warming, is the extent and nature of human activity, it becomes obvious that a key factor in providing protection for the environment is the size of the resident human population.

In commenting on the drafting of the 2011 Jersey Island Plan the Independent Inspectors noted in their final report recommendations that food security is a growing global problem.

The restricted land mass of the Island is already heavily developed and good agricultural land is being lost year-on-year at an undisclosed rate to meet the housing needs of a growing population.

It has been calculated that the UK will be forced to import almost half its food 25 years from now because agricultural output is failing to keep pace with a rising population. In order to preserve the characteristic and attractive appearance of Jersey's rural landscape, policy should also be directed at giving tangible support to the rural economy. If necessary by providing subsidies for all aspects of the agricultural industry in order to increase Island self-sufficiency in the production of food and mitigate the additional costs arising from smaller scale operations dictated by the Island's small size and very restricted farming areas.

It is interesting to note that present policy banning the import of milk has resulted in Jersey's self-sufficiency in this food, albeit at a cost to the public. A litre of milk in the UK (TESCO price on 23.02.15) is roughly half that of the retail price in Jersey.

The recent announcement that Amal-Grow is going out of business because imported food is cheaper and small farms in Jersey which are more labour intensive cannot compete on price with imported food indicates that policy is needed to address this particular problem of sustainability and food security. The ability of future generations to meet future needs for food will be compromised if good agricultural land continues to be lost at the present rate which is unsustainable. It follows that in accordance with present Island Plan Policy that the highest possible densities of building should be demanded whenever previously undeveloped land is used for building. Policy on tall buildings in St Helier and on the Waterfront should be reconsidered.

Marine Environment

It appears that development within Jersey's marine environment is sustainable.

However, territorial boundaries are infringed from time to time by unlicensed and foreign fishermen who threaten the sustainability of fish stocks.

Fishing and aquaculture has developed well over recent years into a successful, commercial enterprise. Stocks of shellfish such as crab, lobster appear to be sustainable while oysters and mussels are being farmed successfully with much being exported to France. Catches of wet-fish including bass, mackerel and various types of flat fish meet most of the local demand for this important food.

The internationally designated *Ramsar* wetland sites of importance at *Les Écréhous* and *Les Minquiers*, together with the South East coast sites, are recognised as needing the highest levels of protection possible.

Historic Environment

It is important for historic and cultural reasons that the historic environment is fully protected in accordance with policies contained in the Revised Jersey Island Plan 2011. This includes all the listed archaeological sites, listed buildings and historic field-patterns that form the unique character of the Jersey countryside.

The abundance of historic fortification sites dating from before the Iron Age until the twentieth century all need recording and given detailed protection in accordance with Jersey Island Plan Policy.

Natural Environment

Jersey is fortunate in its geographical location in giving home to a wide range of flora and fauna not found together elsewhere in the British Isles and adjacent France. Habitats for these rare species also require protection under environmental policies. This can be done most efficiently by introducing into the Jersey Island Plan and policy specifically to protect and preserve significant landscape areas. This policy would cover coastal, rural, marine and built landscapes of special significance. By preserving a landscape area it follows that good protection is given also to the ecology and our special flora and fauna that exists within it.

Economic Aspects

Resident Population

It is generally acknowledged that by living in a scenically attractive, natural and historic environment improves the health and well-being of the population at large. This results in a reduction in the amount of public money needed to provide both mental and physical healthcare.

The Scrutiny Panel should also note that in terms of GVA, as recorded in JIF 2012, the construction industry (6.2%) is larger than agriculture(1.3%) and tourism (Hotels restaurants and bars)(3.9%) combined.

The present policy of an uncontrolled population growth with the consequent need for increased amounts of building development, mostly for additional housing, creates the greatest threat to Jersey's environment, both natural and man-made:

Agriculture

As discussed above, maintaining an efficient agricultural industry in Jersey will provide an insurance against possible future threats to food security. Industrial diversification is sensible political planning objective, guarding against over-reliance on the finance industry. Present policy for safeguarding agricultural land will assist in protecting Jersey's distinctive countryside environment.

Tourism

The environmental attractions of Jersey to the tourist are many and varied. Any diminution in the quality of this Island environment will reduce the appeal of Jersey as a tourist destination.

Conclusion

Policies and Objectives described in Revised Jersey Island Plan 2011 should be sufficient to preserve and protect Jersey's environment providing they are implemented in the way intended.

Information and data is required on the rate at which undeveloped land is being lost to building development. It should be possible to calculate an annual loss-rate that is sustainable into the foreseeable future. Policy should then set a permitted limit on the loss of undeveloped land each year.

It is recommended that a policy on landscape protection should be included as an addition to the Jersey Island Plan.

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