

**STRATEGIC PLANNING - POPULATION
CEILING**

**Lodged au Greffe on 22nd September 1998
by Deputy J.T. Johns of St. Helier**



STATES OF JERSEY

STATES GREFFE

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PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion -

to refer to their Act dated 28th September 1995, in which they approved strategic policies to the year 2000 and beyond, and which included an objective that ‘‘the resident population be the same as, or less than, the current level’’ and -

- (a) to agree to adopt the objective of maintaining the Island’s resident population at the level current in September 1995 as their overriding strategic objective to which all policy objectives of Committees would be subordinated, until the States decide otherwise;
- (b) to charge the Policy and Resources Committee -
 - (i) to put in place all the operational and support structures necessary to implement the objective in sub-paragraph (a);
 - (ii) to monitor continuously the Island’s population numbers, both resident and non-resident;

and to report back to the States before the end of March 1999 on its progress in implementing sub-paragraphs (a) and (b).

DEPUTY J.T. JOHNS OF ST. HELIER.

Report

Members will know that the objective of maintaining the resident population at, or below, the September 1995 total, has been a strategic policy objective of the States since the 1995 Strategic Policy Report ‘‘2000 and Beyond’’ (P.107/95). Almost immediately thereafter, the census taken in March 1996 showed a resident population total of 85,150. There could scarcely be starker evidence of failure to achieve the States’ declared objective. Further, since that time all indications are that the position has become even more acute. Paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3 of the Policy and Resources Committee’s own Strategic Policy Review 1998 (R.C.33) - and recent manpower returns help to prove the point. In paragraph 2.2 the 1998 Report shows that the number of persons in full employment had increased over the two year period between December 1995 and December 1997 by 2,835. In paragraph 2.3, the Policy and Resources Committee seems to rely - in that they fail to recommend any change to their strategic priority rankings such as that proposed in this Proposition - on the prediction in the Employment and Social Security Committee’s information, gathered from a Government Actuary’s Report, that overall population is expected to fall below current numbers ‘‘ by 2034’’. As a member of that latter Committee, I disagreed with such a cosy assumption because -

- (a) it assumes nil net immigration over the intervening 36 years; and
- (b) in the interim period, even this prediction shows a rise in resident population to a peak of 87,000 in 2003/4.

Assumption (a) is flawed in my opinion. Net immigration is dependent, in the absence of any direct, local controls, on European-wide economic trends as well as on our own expansion. Current deregulation of trade barriers, the lifting of immigration restrictions across Europe - and likely soon to include the United Kingdom, - all serve to encourage greater movement than heretofore of young people particularly, seeking a safe haven in which to settle. A wide-open Jersey, despite the Housing Regulations and the current attempts by Policy and Resources to outsource, does appear to be such a safe haven to outsiders.

As to (b), even assuming the accuracy of (a), to accommodate, to educate, to care for, to transport, and to provide entertainment for such a rise in the net population within the Island, will demand more houses, schools, hospitals, roads, parking space and leisure facilities, etc., to meet the peak of 2003/4, rather than for the lesser figure predicted for thirty years after that. Besides the large cost implications of the States providing most - if not all - of this new infrastructure, the more significant cost would be in the loss of green fields and woodlands and all of the small, wild places, which, once built over, would never be reclaimed however much the population subsequently declined by 2034 - or by 2134 for that matter!

As a long-time observer of the States since the 1960s, and of its reaction to the seemingly inexorable rise in the resident population, I have seen solutions come and go, recessions come and, thankfully, go, politicians come and go. Once thing, through it all, remains constant, the overall resident population keeps on rising. There has been the odd period of reduction for a year or two at most. At such times the pressure to find some suitable method of restricting immigration falls away - with an audible sigh of relief from those States committees and officials tasked to "do something about it". The political will then - in the lull - to put in place effective mechanisms in the form of enabling legislation for such devices as residence permits/work permits/barrier controls, or any combination thereof, has always wilted in the face of apparent economic imperatives. 'Businesses have to grow or else they die', we are told. Business people across the capitalist/laissez faire world, it seems, cannot and do not accept the possibility of any middle, less extreme condition for an economy. My view, to the contrary, is that if we, in tiny Jersey with its inherent advantages of compactness and scale, cannot find some modest solution to that problem - or accept, if we absolutely have to - some small, temporary fall in economic activity - we are doomed to a future which will represent a failure of unforgivable proportions.

This Island, like any island, simply should not tolerate economic growth beyond a certain point if it means infrastructure expansion to accommodate it. By definition, an island cannot expand physically to accommodate the continual increases in infrastructure which results from continuous, unrelenting economic expansion, however desirable each new project is judged to be in isolation. We are caught in a vicious

circle; the more we try to satisfy the current demand for better housing, schools, tourism-related infrastructure, etc., the more construction workers we suck in, many of whom will chose to settle here and so, in due time and with local spouses, swell the housing waiting list. According to recent public statements by the Housing Committee President, that waiting list is presently stretching beyond the 1,000 mark. To satisfy that demand alone, let alone any future demand arising out of the disastrous decision in 1994 to re-introduce the 20-year qualifying period for house purchase rights, the Housing Committee, with Planning and Environment's help, is going to need three more Waterfronts or seven more Lesquendes; or, see the Table accompanying this Report for other alternatives. The cultural changes to persuade, for example, young couples to accept flats instead of houses as first-time homes will take too long, I fear, to help in the current situation, even if, we, as politicians, are willing to risk electoral suicide by advocating such a shift.

So, I contend that now is as good a time as any to finally draw a line in the sand.

I applaud the initiatives that the Policy and Resources and Finance and Economics Committees are pursuing to attempt to control the resident population. But these measures have the same fatal flaw that all such previous measures have suffered from, namely, the fact that economic growth is still judged to be the first priority of strategic policy. Until the States decides, in principle, that a ceiling to the Island's resident population is its first and overriding strategic policy objective - and economic growth only next in importance - I maintain that the Island is in real danger of environmental ruin in the not-too-distant future.

Such an outcome would be enough of a tragedy in itself, surely, but it doesn't end there. The building over of much of the Island's green and wild areas would cause such damage to the green tourist element of that industry as to leave us almost totally reliant of the Finance industry and, thus, finally arriving at the Doomsday scenario of becoming a 'one-legged stool' economy. And if that wouldn't represent political failure, I don't know what would.

Unless the States promotes this strategic objective to be its first priority, for the future - as for the past - population numbers will be

governed, in the main, not by any decision or action of the States but by the seemingly random swirl of market forces around and about us. The Island will continue in the position that has got us where we are today, heading for yet another peak in population and helpless to control it more effectively than we could. To accept this proposition will, at last, give us that vital extra degree of control already exercised by many other island communities around the world. To agree this proposition will allow us, for example, to consider future infrastructure improvements without the resulting burden of more immigrant workers settling here.

The current and proposed legislation and regulations to meet rising popular demands for immigration restrictions, e.g. tightening Regulation of Undertakings conditions, I.D. cards, a registration scheme, outsourcing, etc., are moves in the right direction. But they are only the start of the MEANS of achieving that end. The end itself, the basic objective, is the achievement of a numerically stable resident population with, crucially, a clearly identified upper limit. This report and proposition is deliberately not concerned with the means of achieving that end, i.e. all the above procedures new and old with the extra necessary strands of close monitoring of population movements in and out of the Island, etc., only with winning agreement to that basic objective.

I ask the House to agree to this proposition and thus agree to set an upper limit to the Island's resident population to take effect as soon as practically possible.

TABLE

Projections for future infrastructure requirements

		2006	2011
Zero Immigration	A	4	8.5
	B	1380	1510
	C	200	210
	D	120	130
	E	75	80
Growth 200/yr	A	9	16
	B	3450	4640
	C	480	650#
	D	300*	400
	E	190	250
Growth 500/yr	A	17	28
	B	6600	9200
	C	920#	1300##
	D	570**	800***
	E	350	500+

- A "Lesquende equivalents"
- B New cars
- C New parking spaces required in St. Helier
- D Extra primary school children
- E Extra secondary School children

N.B. These are approximate predictions only and based on a linear growth of all factors appertaining today (assumes that a new primary school and 2 new multi-storey car parks are already required in 1997)

- * 1 new primary school
- ** 2 new primary schools
- *** 3 new primary schools

- + 1 new secondary school
- # 1 new multi-storey car park
- ## 2 new multi-storey car parks