

STATES OF JERSEY



RURAL ECONOMY STRATEGY (P.112/2005): AMENDMENT (P.112/2005 AMD.)– COMMENTS

**Presented to the States on 19th July 2005
by the Economic Development Committee**

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

The Committee is pleased to note that the Constable recognises in his report that the Rural Economy Strategy does give considerable weight to the issue of greater public access to the Countryside.

In fact the strategy will deliver greater public access through 2 mechanisms.

1. Support for diversification, including for example the creation of open farms and educational/visitor facilities.
2. The Countryside Renewal Scheme, which has specific components for footpath creation. Applications processed under this scheme so far in 2005 will deliver 3 kilometres of new footpaths and bridleways in 4 parishes.

The Committee is encouraged by this early progress and believes it has correctly judged that the objective of greater access is best delivered through voluntary, incentivised mechanisms.

However, the Committee cannot envisage how a mandatory approach as advocated by the Constable could work – and the Constable does not provide any detail of how an individual agricultural holding would comply with the requirement. In Jersey a very large proportion of farmland is occupied (farmed) by people other than the owners who would have to give permission for a public right of way to be created. Should an owner not give permission for access, then any aid paid on condition of public access would be lost to the occupier through no fault of their own.

Furthermore, a complete “right to roam” policy would be unworkable and would carry with it various health and safety implications. Farmland is a working environment, and is not a place for leisure walkers (especially children) to mix with heavy machinery. Issues such as damage to crops, injury from/to livestock all need to be thought through, including who is to pay for the insurance cover that would be required within a mandatory scheme. Public access delivered in an uncontrolled and unplanned manner can cause considerable disturbance that is detrimental to wildlife.

The Countryside Renewal Scheme will allow the States to work with landowners to secure access arrangements – to join up and complete existing routes and to develop new routes where, for instance, they are identified by the Sustainable Travel and Transport Plan.

For these reasons the Committee does not support the Amendment.