



Migration and Population Review Panel

Common Population Policy Review

Witness: Jersey Hospitality Association

Friday, 21st January 2022

Panel:

Senator S.W. Pallett (Chair)

Deputy S.M. Ahier of St. Helier

Deputy G.J. Truscott of St. Brelade

Witnesses:

Ms. C. Boscq, Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association

[15:00]

Senator S.W. Pallett:

I am going to do the first couple of questions and then I am going to hand over to my colleague Deputy Ahier for the next 3. Then we will work our way down through our question plan. I am sure you will say some things that I am sure we will ask questions about as we move through. Anyway, I will start because I am conscious of time and I know it is Friday afternoon and we all want to go home. Do you believe that the Jersey Hospitality Association and the sector has had sufficient opportunity to take part in the formulation of the policy that is now being proposed by the Council of Ministers?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Well, it would have been interesting to see how many of the people from hospitality had attended some of those workshops and some of the responses. I do not believe I have seen any figures so that would have been quite good. In terms of responding to it now from the questions that we are

sent, I have been really struggling to try to get feedback from anybody. I was saying to Anna, I think, it is trying to read 124 pages and understand it, is it the time, is it a bit of blasé that they do not think anything is going to change. But I have had very little responses from the members in terms of consultation, give me some feedback, what do you think about that policy that is coming. I wanted to say that a little bit from the beginning because it was quite hard to try to get information back from the members at the moment.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Has it been difficult ... has the time of year made it difficult? Obviously around Christmas and New Year it is always busy for the hospitality sector. Is that one of the reasons maybe it has been difficult and there has been a pretty short period for responding as well?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Yes, I think so. I think it has been 3 weeks almost since I sent it out the first time and almost been chasing every week. It just seems to be such a short time to be able to read the policy, understand it and then make some relevant points that will affect them but also perhaps that will affect us as the industry.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay, we are going to go into more detail around the policy as we work through, but just following on from the formulation of the policy itself, are you satisfied with the level and the form of the consultation that has taken place with Government on the policy, whether it has been over a period of time, I know you have not been involved all the way through but you may be able to comment a little bit over the last few months, whether you think that consultation has been good enough?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

From the figures that I can ... like I said, I have been here 4 months, so I have only been here since September, 5 months, so I am really jumping into the shoes. Just for background, it does not seem that there is a lot of response, as a whole, for the consultation considering we have 107,000 on this Island. When I am looking at the figures, it just seems very small in terms of ... so there were some good contents, the figures seem okay when you are looking at it but really the number of people who responded is not great. I think that was one of my member's feedback to say really how can we look at this policy when there was such a small number of people responding to it.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Absolutely, and we respect that you are the body that obviously represents the hospitality industry and if you have not had the feedback sometimes it is very difficult to take a view. In terms of the population management, what are your concerns and hopes around population management and

do you think they have been addressed in any way within that policy? What was the feedback you have had on that?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

I think the main views from the members is around the permits and being able to recruit people. The problems that hospitality is having ... and it says in the policy that the main aim of the policy is to reduce inward immigration, however when nobody on the Island wants to work in hospitality how are we filling up the vacancies, how are we running our hotels, how are we running the restaurants, when no one locally wants to work in the hospitality industry. It is very hard when the first sentence of a policy is: "We want to reduce the inward immigration" when our industry relies on the immigrant because no one else wants to work in that industry.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

What I can take from that then is that the concerns that your members have have not been fully addressed within this particular policy, whether you think it is a policy or not?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Yes, I think it is very much looking at what is ... yes, you can understand we need to look at what is good for the Island but in the bigger picture if we do not have the hotels, if we do not have the restaurants, if we do have the buzz that hospitality brings, where are people going to go? Where are locals going to go? Where are the tourists going to go? I do not think that the members are seeing that as being helpful. In the long term it is not going to help the Island, it needs to have a better balance between the immigrant and people living here.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

You partially answered this but I will ask you anyhow, in your view, in terms of just the short to medium- term needs of hospitality, does the policy take sufficient account of those needs, the short to medium term?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Probably not. I think really we need to ... the members would want to see the permits to help them run their business, to be 4 years. They have these permits of 9 months at the moment, which really is not helping. It takes about £2,500, £3,000 per employee to onboard somebody and for them to stay 9 months, it is just not viable for the business. In the short term having a longer permit where we can train the people, where we can nurture them - they will not go towards the population because they will not be staying here for more than 5 years - that will give the members an extending time to do some good work with them and deliver that great service that everybody is expecting. Working hand in hand with this, it is obviously the accommodation piece of it so again in the policy

there is very little about that worker accommodation. I am just trying to go back to my notes. It does talk about suitable and affordable but again we do not have enough data. We need incentives, right sizing. Planning is not helping because no one can build anything. So all those issues are working hand in hand to create and help the hospitality industry to encourage our local and young talent to work in that industry. We still need to be able to run the business because if we do not now there will be no business next year or 2 years' time. After the last 2 years it is a tough one.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

You have mentioned the difficulty about attracting staff and employing staff. We have seen the amendments to the Control of Housing and Work (Jersey) Law lodged yesterday. We have clearly had issues with Brexit and COVID which have caused all sorts of problems for your industry and others as well, in terms of those permissions, are you concerned that they might put even more pressure on the ability of the industry to attract staff?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Yes, absolutely. It is ridiculous. Very simple ... it is not just the permits and the giving the permission it is everything else that comes behind it because we have to the visas now. It has to be by a visa. So if they are leaving Madeira they have to travel to the city, they have to fly over to get their visa done, there is so much red tape and it costs so much for the employees and the employer.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

I understand the cost because we have been told about it. Before these amendments were lodged, has there been any recent consultation with you as a representative body around the issues that your members are facing and have they taken any of those concerns into account, do you know?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

I am not sure, I am sorry. It was before my time. From that consultation paper it looks like J.H.A. (Jersey Hospitality Association) had been consulted on that but it was prior to my time and, I am sorry, I would not be able to tell you.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

These particular amendments have been ... yes, the amendments were approved early last year but the amendments themselves have not been completed. They have only just been lodged. They have been working on them for the last 6, 8 months. So there has been no formal consultation with you around them before they were lodged?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Not that I know of.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay, all right, that is fine. Okay, before I move on ...

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

If we could go back to the accommodation piece, because that is quite a big one. In the documentation, in the policy, they talk about recommending a provision of 25 key worker homes, which seems totally ridiculous to me. Twenty-five when we usually have 1,500 extra staff in the summer coming to work on the Island.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Twenty-five units, not 25 buildings. Twenty-five units of accommodation.

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Yes, it says: "Key workers homes per year, 25." So this just not make sense. The members they want to be able to have the facilities to perhaps reuse some of the old buildings, do them up and use them because they are not in use at the moment or I have members that are desperate to build something and they cannot find anywhere to put them on or they cannot get any application either. There is a real frustration from the members. They want to do what is best but they are not given the tools to do that, if you see what I mean.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Are you getting any feedback from your members, because I know one or 2, whether they are your members, I am not sure, but I know people that are in hospitality looking to convert buildings or buy buildings to put their staff in. Do you know whether they are getting any support from Government, especially from the Planning Department in terms of getting this accommodation through?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

No, there is nothing, there is no support, there is no ... all that is being done is just being rejected as well. I have had a couple of members completely out of their wits because they are not even being given any opportunities to be able to do that. That is quite frustrating.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

I am going to go on to long-term needs now. Do you believe the policy meets the long-term needs of the hospitality industry in Jersey?

[15:15]

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

I am not sure if the policy is realistic in the long term because looking at that net zero, is that really realistic that we could ever, ever get to those figures. When we are looking at the figures on numbers of new born, children and all the people, this is just ... I do not think it is realistic. A couple of members have sent me something about this as well, saying with a dependency ratio of around 50 now and raising to cover 80 per cent in 40 days with a policy of net zero immigration we are absolutely stuffed. Economically how can 20 per cent of the working policy fund an 80 per cent dependency?

Senator S.W. Pallett:

That is very much about the ageing population. That clearly is an issue with your members, they can see that dependency ratio getting to a point where it is not viable. Okay.

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

So long term ... there is a short term which I think we need to very quick in being able to help the members to get those permits and get those people on Island and be able to give them some nice accommodation where they feel they are on that beautiful Island that we live in. The problem is at the moment the high cost of living here ... the cost of coming here - a visa, recruitment flight, all those kinds of things - and then the cost of living, why would they come here? Why would people come here? Yes, we want our locals to work here but do we have data on anybody who wants to work in hospitality, like people from Back to Work and that? They do not want to work in hospitality and all our members have tried to get locals and it is just not working.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay, I am going to hand over to my colleague, Deputy Ahier, for the next 3 questions.

Deputy S.M. Ahier of St. Helier:

The proposal inaugural common population policy, do you believe that it is fit for purpose?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Probably the short answer is the members would say no. There are areas that are fit for purpose but a lot that are not providing what our members need for them to run their businesses.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

You mentioned before on the Control of Housing and Work (Jersey) Law permits only being 9 months that is a barrier to employing more staff. What sort of term do you believe would be a reasonably acceptable length of time?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

I have to say when I arrived we worked with customs and we had an agreement to have that extension of 9 months, which was very pleasing to see that has happened but that is only going to be this year and that is only going to be until 1st April. Our members are looking at 4 years, which is a good enough time to get people over, you have time to almost make the money back of what you have spent in the recruitment and training and all that kind of thing. They also have time to give them ... because they are only going to be working in that hotel, they cannot be jumping from one to the other, which is what people coming from the C.T.A. (Common Travel Area) do. They arrive on the Island, they find a job and then a month later they will find another one which will pay them an extra £1 and then they will move to the other because there is no control. Whereas with a permit we have the control. Having a longer term of 3 or 4 years will be helping that short term. People will be a lot happier and then we will be able to deliver a much better service to the Island.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

The proposed policy highlights the need to improve skills and education, do you believe the policy will help do this in relation to your industry, in hospitality?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

I wish there was potentially a bit more in there about it, skills and training is top of my agenda at the J.H.A. to help. In terms of support, I believe that we could get some support if I am training the local people but if I am training anybody who is only on the short term, nobody is helping us to do that. So in a bigger picture I would love to see working hotels, we are talking about a university within the policy, why could we not have that absolutely fantastic working hotel like in Lausanne and attracting high end students to come to the Island, bring their parents over, it is generating a new tourism industry, it is generating new people being attracted to this industry which is such a fantastic industry to be in. If people see other people coming on the Island to do that, would it not be a great incentive for our young talent to be encouraged and inspired to do that?

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Are there areas that the proposed policy does not provide guidance on that you would like to have seen addressed directly?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

I think everything is covered in it as such. I am trying to look at other notes that I have taken, if you can just ... something that I picked up on, which talked about other industries, like the fisheries and agriculture, which are being given some grants or some support, 50/50 support.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

There is one mention of grants being offered but from what we hear from the farming industry, they do not seem to be receiving them.

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Right. Again, I was just going to say that nothing has been received in hospitality either. If we could add that to it, that would be good. Again, why are we doing something for one industry and not the other. I know I may be jumping the gun at the moment but the co-funding, why did we give it to the hotels and not the cafes? Why are we giving it to hospitality and not to retail? If we want our Island to thrive this is a bigger issue than just hospitality. We want to our Island to thrive. Similarly with recruitment and accommodation, this is an Island issue not just a hospitality issue, for sure.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Absolutely. It is the right course of action to commit future Council of Ministers to include its policy on population in Government Plans from 2023 onwards. What impact do you think this will have, if any?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

I think there are so many question marks on that policy with not enough data here and not enough information there. Perhaps we could be doing this ... I am not sure the policy is straight enough and understood enough to be able to do something about it. Really - and I may be speaking out of turn - the elections are coming in 3 months' time, is anything going to be done anyway for the next 10 months?

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Yes, that is the concern, that this Council of Ministers will make a decision and then post-election the next Council of Ministers may just disregard it.

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Totally, totally. That is a big concern we have with the tourism strategy supposedly coming in March, it will be exactly the same thing. If we put in a policy right now it may just be totally put on the side and refocused, a total change on everything.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Just before I move on, I will just refer you back, you are obviously struggling to employ more people. We were speaking to the farming industry and they were getting a lot of people come in from the Philippines. Have you made any approaches to anybody in Asian countries who are keen to move over and work for short periods?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Yes, so I have spoken to the same agent that the agriculture industry have had. The thing is there needs to be a partnership agreement between the J.H.A. and the Philippines Consulate and the J.H.A. is to take responsibility for the members and for the recruitment, which means J.H.A. becoming a recruitment agency. At the moment I am on my own and there is only so many hours of the day so it has been put to the board of the J.H.A. to say: "Do we want to create a recruitment agency as part of the J.H.A. to help in doing this?" This would be a way to really look at other opportunities. Yes, we do have recruitment agencies like GR8, which is one of our business partners, but we need to be able to give a bigger solution strategy to our members and there are things that are being worked out with internal affairs at the moment. Would it be good, would it be amazing for perhaps the Government to help instead of me trying to think we need perhaps to have a recruitment agency. Could that not be done by social security and have a little team, instead of looking for people to get work internal, can they help bring people over? That would be very good. That would be very helpful to have the Government helping with doing this. But that totally goes against the policy so nothing will ever happen.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Do you manage to attract many school leavers? We understand that 500 school leavers go to university out of 1,000 leaving each year, that leaves quite a large number.

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Yes, we do have ... again, I have attended several of the Skills Jersey things and some of the schools doing some of those things. Some of the kids are good but, again, they see that as a Saturday job and not necessarily as a career. The bigger issue in that is it is not the kids, it is the parents. I think it is a mindset we need to change. This is my biggest challenge, to change that perception that hospitality is an industry that you cannot work in it, there is no future, it does not get paid well, there are too many hours. That is the perception of the parents. The parents are pushing their kids to go towards the financial industry because they do not want them to work in hospitality. Whereas if we see that industry as bringing the island in, the career path that you could be having, so there is a lot of work to be done here in terms of the industry itself and the perception from the parents, not so much the kids.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

What are your views on the proposed overall aim to progressively reduce Jersey's reliance of net inward migration with the currently agreed common strategic policy? Do you feel this is an achievable goal?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

I think I mentioned it at the beginning, I do not think it is realistic, nor do the members.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Do you think there should be an actual figure on a limitation of numbers for the increase in population each year, or do you think it should be open-ended?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

The problem is we are not able to bring anybody on to the Island at the moment because of the cost of the recruitment, the red tape of the permits and visas, so letting people who want to come and work here come would be a great thing. To have more people who want to come and work on the Island, which is what the policies is not seeing, we do need that population and having them coming from the outside and having them controlled because they are working in a specific industry is a lot easier than having people from C.T.A. who will come and work and jump all over the place and then get residency. That is why I think there is not such a balance and an understanding that that balance is needed.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

So a limitation on net inward migration would directly impact the hospitality industry?

[15:30]

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Yes, totally.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Thank you very much, I will pass over now to Deputy Truscott.

Deputy G.J. Truscott of St. Brelade:

Hi, Claire. I have been listening with much interest on what you have had to say. I have taken on board as well the point that you made regarding the 4 year permits and I think that makes absolutely so much sense, because, as you say, all of the expense of getting people here, the visa and so on, and that is something we should look at in every industry. I am sure you agree it should be looked at on a case-by-case basis. The construction industry would probably benefit from some similar treatment as well. I am just curious, before I start my questions, it has been a problem and the amount of people on the Island is greatly restricted since Brexit, what has happened to the hourly wage because obviously we as a Government annually - or pretty much annually - have put it up, it is now £9.22 an hour? There has been, because of the shortage, a spiral of people jumping ship

and going for the extra £1 per hour, as you have already mentioned, where has that left the industry? You must be struggling there alone, I would have thought.

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Yes, and to be honest, paying a kitchen porter £12.50 an hour is probably not seen anywhere. £12.50 an hour is a good wage, right? That is for that service line position so it pushes everything. Not only does it make an elastic city in terms of the pricing and how much they are charging but it makes it a competition because they are competing with each other for the same chef, because we do not have enough chefs qualified. That makes for competition and elasticity and then the chefs think they are more qualified than what they are. So they are going for jobs when they are not qualified for it. It really is very difficult to manage. This is why being able to have a workforce that is controlled, which has as work permit for so many years for such and such a company, this will reduce that completely because we will not have them going everywhere.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

That is a very good point. I have to say when I sat on H.A.W.A.G. (Housing and Work Advisory Group) a few years ago, chefs were like hens' teeth, you just could not get them. Is that still the case?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Yes, absolutely. Absolutely desperate for chefs. I am trying to do a new chef circle, I am trying to bring the chefs together to see what they are missing in terms of gaps. We are looking at nurturing our chefs and bringing some new training locally so we can nurture the chefs that we have so they do not want to go after 18 months, they want to stay here because they are enjoying it and they are upskilling themselves and they are seeing ... chefs always want to upskill, right, they always want to learn more so we need to be able to give them that. At the moment there is not that community, so it is something I am trying to do.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Highlands College have a training facility and I do believe chefs now are paid particularly well - I understand that to be the case - are we managing to train up our local chefs and retain them?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Highlands College has done well. I believe the last couple of years they have had an influx of local, which is very encouraging. Again, I think there is a lot of positioning that needs to be done in terms of marketing the position. Why would we work on this Island? What is the benefit? What is the benefit of working in the hospitality industry? This is a big part of that perception that the industry is not paid well. Actually, the majority of our members are paying well above the minimum wage and

plus you have your tips, plus you have your accommodation, plus you have your food, plus you have your uniform. Most of the members are looking at all those areas. They are changing the way they are doing business as well. We have seen some of the restaurants closing 2 days a week. I have never seen. Never seen that.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Totally agree. For all Governments around the world, particularly following COVID, inflation is a major worry going forward. I have been in business for many years and you can only absorb increasing cost of materials for so long until you have to put your price up. Are you then such an attractive package to draw in tourists and customers? That is a real problem going forward.

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Absolutely. That impacts on everything because, like you said, it is the tourists coming so Visit Jersey are trying to bring people but you know the British can go for 10 days in Spain instead of 5 days in Jersey because we are too expensive. What can we do? All those taxes, all those costs have to be added on to it.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

It is all about the bottom line now, to a degree, at the end of the day. Going into the questions we have in front of us, in your view what will the overall impact of this common population policy be?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

I think if we are being honest, this will probably damage the industry and we will see restaurants closing down and hotels perhaps deciding that it is not worth it. So much passion in this industry so that people are staying open. Probably they would make a lot more money in doing something else but they are just so passionate about it that they are staying here. Being able to give them a bit of support would be nice, just to continue seeing our Island as beautiful as it is. The policy talks about identity. The Jersey identity would be nowhere if we did not have a beautiful restaurant with lobsters that we can eat and our 5 star chefs. This would not be part of the identity if we did not have it.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Okay, that is great. The proposed policy makes it clear that all sectors of the community have a part to play in making the policy work for Jersey. Do you understand from the policy what the role of your sector is?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

I do, I am just not getting any feedback from the members. That comes back to what I said right at the beginning, I am just not getting the feedback. I have had a certain amount of feedback which

was very welcome but I have been sending it out so why are they not responding? Are they too busy? Can they not see that whatever they are saying is not going to be taken into account anyway so why bother. I think there is a little bit of that in timing. With the elections coming I think they think nothing is going to happen.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

What actions do you believe Islanders, businesses and the Government of Jersey need to take to meet the proposed policy?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

We do need to work together, it is very important to have those conversations and those openings to make sure we are all giving a little bit so we can understand. We all want the same thing, we all want to have our Island to thrive, right? Being able to understand the business side of it with a Government point of view, sometimes they just do not understand each other.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

I guess the Government could look at reducing the amount of red tape and possibly make the cost of permits, et cetera, slightly less but those are things that have to be taken into account going forward. In your view, is there sufficient rationale in the proposed policy for the conclusion that it is premature to set any specific population forecasts?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Yes, totally I would agree with that. There are just too many places that we do not have enough information, we do not have enough data, we do not know enough and just the figures, the number of people who are attending, it has not taken off. We just need more time to really look at it and the impact of it in the long term.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

I agree, we do not even know how many people have left the Island since COVID and Brexit so that alone is a deficiency in our intelligence. Finally, then, in your view does the proposed common population policy take sufficient account of the rights of workers in your industry?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Well, no. We will come back to the same ones, permits, accommodation. Those are the ones that probably are the most important ones. Skills, productivity, all those kind of things, we can do things about it. We can put training on, we can help them think about how to be more productive, we can do those things but if we have red tape around being able to build accommodation or being able to bring some staff over, that is it for the industry.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Brilliant, thank you. I will hand you back to the Chair.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

I just have a couple of other questions. It is mentioned several times in the front of the policy that the goal of the Government is to have a stable and sustainable population policy. Do you have an understanding or thoughts about what that should mean, what a stable and sustainable population should be?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

I think this is very objective, is it not? What I think is totally different from everybody else. We have 350 members which makes it quite difficult to be able to answer for everybody. I do think that we do need to look at this, it is important that we are looking at the population, that we are understand it but doing it in a way where all the industries are taken into account and their issues, more work needs to be done to it.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

It is no secret we are going to have more over 65s over the next 15, 20 years. When the statement sustainable is used, would you say that could possibly mean that we need to sustain an adequate working population, not only to support the economy but also to support those that have retired? There will be an awful lot more retired people in years to come.

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Yes, it is also quite sad. You know, you are 65, you worked for 45 years and now you are being asked to work even more. I think that is just maybe my own thought on that. Also regarding the hospitality industry, as much as a 67 year-old would be very good perhaps to help out in doing more back office work, in our industry there is a lot of movement, a lot of walking around and a lot of standing up, perhaps it would not help us in the industry to have those workers. This is perhaps more back end office workers. There certainly is going to be a big gap between our young people and the older generation. The figures shown on some of the statistics are quite worrying really.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Hospitality can be a tough industry. Are you saying there that over 65s, could be over 67s because the age is going to go up, may find it difficult to not survive but enjoy working in an industry such as the hospitality sector?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Yes, it is a very fast industry and a lot of the jobs are on their feet. There are jobs that can be done from the back end and I am sure a lot of the mentoring and things like that would be very welcome with more skilled people but a lot of the jobs within the industry are very much on the go. Eight hours standing on your feet, walking around, it is painful when you are my age and when you are 20 so ...

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Yes. I still think 65 is the new 45 but there we go, but maybe it is because I am getting to 65.

[15:45]

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

I am sorry, I do not mean that in a very ... I am sorry I really do not mean that but it is very physical, it is like agriculture, it is physical. It keeps you fit.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

I worked in the building industry for a long time and I would not want to be digging holes at 65, that is for sure.

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Right.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

I see Deputy Truscott has his hand up before I ask anything else.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

With one of the people we spoke today we touched on increasing taxes going forward to pay for vital infrastructure and the ageing demographic issue as well. Certainly at social security we had somebody look at the idea of putting up contributions, for example 2 per cent for employers, 2 per cent for employees, and that would mitigate the issue going forward with paying for everything. No doubt it would have a major impact on your industry but your view on that would be appreciated.

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

No, you can put your hand down. I have mentioned it before but it is already difficult to try to find people to come on the Island because of the high cost of living, the high cost of accommodation, the high cost of food, so if they have to pay more tax on top of that they will have less and less benefit to come on the Island. I am sure you have seen this week about some of the Kenyans coming to work on the Island and feeding a whole family back home for a month with the salary that

they have. The more taxes they pay the less they are going to be able to do that. They may just be looking at going to the U.K. (United Kingdom) or going to France or going somewhere else. If we cannot make the Island attractive for people to come and work here definitely we will not have any issue on inward migration but we will not have any businesses left.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

I agree and for the record I do not advocate putting up taxes in any shape or form.

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

No, no, I was kidding.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Thank you for your view, that is great.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

That is an interesting point about social security and tax. What is your members' view around ... I do not think anybody could argue if you earn an income in the Island that you should pay tax on that. In terms of social security payments, a lot of these people now that come to the Island are only coming here for a 9 month period and they are getting no benefit from the social security system at all. What are your thoughts on whether we should reconsider that and maybe not ask them to pay social security or reduce the levels of social security that they pay?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

That would be a great incentive. We were talking about co-funding and I have been told there is only so much money we have in the pot that we can give. What else can we do then to incentivise workers to come to the Island? Those kind of things would be such a ... it goes directly to the employees, it is not going to the employer but it would be a great incentive to be able to do that. That is thinking outside the box, what can we do to incentivise people to come and work here and enjoy Jersey, and continue making it the beautiful place that it is?

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Just to go back again to the population policy, there is no real target in here and that is down to what the Government say is lack of data. There are assumptions in the policy around future population or future inward migration levels. The bridging Island Plan, for example, has plus 800 as its assumption moving forward. There is no intention to have a policy in place until 2024, 2025. Do you think it would have been better for business and your members if the Government had used an assumption in the intervening period while they were gaining the data so at least businesses would have a policy to work off?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Funny you saying that. When I was reading it and I was thinking all this time instead of assuming or saying we do not have enough data, make a decision and put some steps forward so there could be some kind of measurement and we could see ... okay, leave it open and if over the next couple of years we can see that is not working then that is fine, we can open it up and change it. It does say in the policy that it is going to be an open policy, open to changes, which is good because it could not be structured saying that is what we are going to do and this is it because what is the next 2 years going to bring us? We would have never thought the last 2 years was going to ever happen. We need to take it gently but we need to be able to be flexible with it and create the right balance with it.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

It is interesting that you say that the policy is open and I suppose it is because it has not been set yet. Are you expecting your association and your members to be consulted each year in regards to that policy, especially in the run up to setting a policy?

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Yes, definitely. I should hope so.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Good, okay. That is clear and I think it is important that Government understand your sector and other sectors will be expecting to be consulted.

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

But perhaps give us a bit more time. As I said right at the beginning, they are busy, they are running around trying to find staff. They are painting their walls. I have had a member this morning just all over the place. A bit more time so we can give them the time to read through it and understand it would be good.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Fantastic. I do not have any more questions. Do Deputy Truscott or Deputy Ahier have any other questions?

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Just one last one, if I may. Claire, I think it was in last night's paper that it is predicted we are due a very good season going forward, fingers crossed. All the indications show that it will be quite a good

season. Is the industry going to be capable of a good season? Are we resilient enough to ... there is nothing worse than people arriving in Jersey to find that ...

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Absolutely. This is the key to everything, Graham. We are spending a lot of money attracting people on the Island, all those tourists are coming, we are telling them: "Come on, come and see our beautiful hotels, come and stay and have the beautiful food that we have." If we cannot deliver that service, if we cannot deliver that experience, that promise that Jersey is giving everybody, this is going to be a car crash. It is going to be an Island brand disaster, it will not be hospitality it will be Jersey was rubbish and we will never go back.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Good point, thank you. Thank you for this afternoon, it has been most valuable.

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

I am French so sometimes I just talk the way I think.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

I am part French as well.

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

That is all right then.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

We are not going to get into the discussion of who is from where and ...

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Let us not bring the French into it. That is a different conversation, right?

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Steve, do you have any questions?

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

No, nothing further, Steve.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Brilliant. Okay, Claire, we thank you for your participation today. It is the end of the week and I know it has been a busy week for everybody. Obviously we will give you a recording of what has

been said ... what is the word, Steve? Yes, we will provide the transcript for you before we write the report, or anything is published, or we use anything that you said. I do thank you.

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

If there is something I have missed or something that perhaps you need to supplement, do let me know, I want to be involved as much as we can, especially with the next few weeks and few months when the elections are coming up as well, it is important that if you are going to be putting that policy in place before the elections that you have all the information from all the industries.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Obviously we have to get this report out for our sitting on 8th February. We have the Control of Housing and Work Law amendments, which we still have to review, so we may come back to you for some comments around that. We will look at that in more depth next week when we have finished the hearings on the population policy. Again, I want to thank you and hope you have a good weekend.

Chief Executive, Jersey Hospitality Association:

Thank you very much. Thank you, everybody.

[15:56]