

POPULATION POLICY (P.101/2002): AMENDMENT

**Lodged au Greffe on 18th June 2002
by Deputy M.E. Vibert of St. Brelade**



STATES OF JERSEY

STATES GREFFE

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POPULATION POLICY (P.101/2002) - AMENDMENT

For paragraph (f) of the proposition substitute the following paragraph -

“(f) to agree in principle that there should be a policy of nil net annual inward migration, this policy to be reviewed five years hence;”

and in paragraph (h) for the words “does not exceed 200 persons” substitute the words “remains at zero”.

DEPUTY M.E. VIBERT OF ST. BRELADE

REPORT

Introduction

1. The Policy and Resources Committee's proposition seeks to overturn a previous States' decision by actively planning for a growth in inward migration of up to 200 persons annually for at least the next five years. Whilst I welcome and support the proposals contained in the proposition to finally control that area of population growth over which we are able to exercise some control, namely inward migration, I do not agree we should plan to let this sector grow at four times the rate it has been growing at for the past decade. This not only goes directly against established States' policy but also against what I believe is the clearly expressed views of the majority of Islanders and cannot be described as sustainable in any reasonable interpretation of that concept.

Public's views

2. At election after election in recent years there has been overwhelming support for the view that immigration should be checked. A view then supported on the election platform by a number of the States members now seemingly supporting the complete opposite as proposed by the Policy and Resources Committee in paragraph (f) of P.101/2002.

Perhaps the best gauge of Islander's views on a wide-scale basis was carried out in the MORI Poll of 1995, just 7 years ago. There were 15,800 replies to that poll and all the data resulting from them was weighted to adjust the sample profile to that of the Island's population taken from the then most recent census information.

In reply to the question "how would you like to see the size of the population of the Island change over the next ten years, if at all?", 8 per cent said it should increase a little, 41 per cent said it should decline a little and 20 per cent said it should decline a lot.

That poll was taken in 1995 when the population was thought to be around 85,000, it was asking people to look 10 years ahead, to 2005, still 3 years away and seeking their views. The answer was quite unequivocal from the vast majority. 92 per cent did not want to see the population grow. Only 8 per cent said it should increase a little, but that is the option Policy and Resources are proposing, which is directly against the expressed views of the vast majority of Islanders when they were last asked 7 years ago.

Policy and Resources proposals also go directly against "Jersey Into The Millennium - A Sustainable Future" issued in December 2001, which was the outcome of a long, rigorous and transparent process involving a large number of local people.

In the Executive Summary to this work it states the sustainable position on population very clearly: "The outcomes of the process of developing this strategy have confirmed the view that *maintaining a permanent resident population the same or less than the current level* is central to environmental, economic and social objectives discussed throughout the Strategy (15.1 Executive Summary).

States' Policy

3. Existing States policy on population was set in 1997, in the light of and reflecting the views expressed by Islanders in the 1995 MORI poll. The policy was expressed as an objective that the resident population should be the same as, or less than, the level of population in 1995, when it was estimated to be about 85,000.

In hindsight, it is accepted this policy, brought to the States by the Policy and Resources Committee, could have been better worded but the spirit of the policy is perfectly clear, that continued population growth needed to be checked.

Population implications

4. At a nil net migration scenario for the next 30 years, the population will continue at approximately its present level until 2031, according to the Policy and Resources Committee's own figures, rising only through natural growth, births over deaths, from the present 87,186 to 88,621.

A policy of 200 net inward migration continued up until 2031, would mean the population of Jersey would grow to 97,344.

An annual net inward migration figure of nil sees a population growth over the next 30 years of 1,435, while an annual net inward migration figure of 200 leads to a population growth over the next 30 years of 10,158.

So a policy of letting in an extra 200 persons a year for the next 30 years would lead to an increase in the population of 8,723 more people than a nil net inward migration policy. Not just an increase of the equivalent of 200 a year, but nearly half as many again because these new immigrants will naturally start families of their own adding nearly 3,000 more to the population figure than the direct 6,000 inward migration.

Even over a five-year period letting in an extra 200 people a year would mean a population increase of a minimum of 1,000, assuming none of those 200 had children during that time.

Policy and Resources Committee's Arguments

5. The Policy and Resources Committee's proposal to actively allow inward migration appears to be based on its interpretation of projected economic impacts allied to demographic change related to an ageing population.

On pages 24 and 25 of P.101.2002, quoting Strathclyde's work, it states -

- *Under the assumption of nil net migration, the level of national income in Jersey (measured by GDP) would be about 0.1 per cent higher by 2011 than it would otherwise have been. GNP (or GNI) rises by slightly more, 0.2 per cent, reflecting the increase in public sector activities to meet the needs of the increased population. But both these effects are very small. Employment would be little changed as well;*
- *Under the assumption of 200 net inward migration each year by 2011, the cumulative level of GDP would be two percentage points higher than it would have been with unchanged policies by 2011. GNP would be 2.5 per cent higher and employment would have grown by about 3.5 per cent. More than a quarter of this increase would have appeared in financial services. A further one quarter would appear in other private sector services.*

So allowing in an extra 2,200 people, with all the implications that entails, housing, effect on the environment etc, generates a 1.9 per cent growth in GDP or a 2.3 per cent growth in GNP in 10 years.

What is not addressed in the Population Policy put forward by the Policy and Resources Committee is whether such a growth if needed, or a smaller one needed by a smaller population, could be generated in alternative ways.

The current policy of the States is economic growth without population growth. I believe that policy has been outstandingly successful and should be continued. The success of this policy is referred to by Policy and Resources in P.101/2002 (page 7, paragraph 7).

Coupled with a continuation of this policy I believe the Island should be substantially increasing the level of the Strategic Reserve so as to have reserves with which to address the forthcoming bulge in the ageing of the population.

Employment

6. Referring to Strathclyde's just quoted scenario based on the assumption of 200 net inward migration each year up to 2011, employment in the Island would have grown by about 3.5 per cent. It goes on to say more than a quarter of this increase would have appeared in financial services and a further quarter in other private sector services, does this mean the other just under a half of increased employment is in the public sector? Does it mean half the new jobs created would be States and other public sector jobs? The Policy and Resources Committee's report is silent on this vital issue that calls into question just how much additional benefit allowing in an extra 200 persons a year would generate over and above the extra demand they themselves would be creating within the Island.

More pertinent to the question of employment is the estimated 2,500 turnover of people in the Island each year. It is, in the first instance, on this turnover of people the Island's efforts at improving its employment base should be concentrated, not on allowing in an extra 200 per year.

Implications of increased inward migration

7. The Policy and Resources Committee's argument for allowing net inward migration of up to 200 a year appears to be the positive impact of their generating increased wealth, GDP or GNP, for the Island.

But what could be the downside of allowing in up to 200 extra persons annually? What about, for example, the environmental impact this would have. Unfortunately, so P.101 informs us, "At this stage of Strathclyde's work, only limited environmental impacts have been studied."

This seems to be limited to traffic emissions, which would have increased by 2.5 per cent by 2011 under the assumption of net inward migration of 200 each year.

No mention is made of how much extra land would be required to house what would be under the same assumption the over 2,000 extra people in the Island, how our sewers system would cope, how many more doctors and nurses and beds we would need at the hospital to serve such a population increase and so on. The report singularly fails to address how any part of our infrastructure would cope and the demand this would put on finite Island resources.

Yet without any of this information the States are being asked to blindly sign up to a target of annual net inward migration of up to 200 a year for at least the next five years.

Choice of inward migration level

8. Why is an inward migration target of 200 a year being proposed? The average annual net inward migration for the past decade has been around 50 per annum, so why do the Policy and Resources Committee want to quadruple it?

P.101/2002 simply says in its conclusions "there should be an assumption for policy planning purposes of annual net inward migration of up to 200 persons". Why 200, why not 150, why not 300, why not nil?

One argument is the 200 figure has been used by other States' Committees, notably Planning and Environment and Employment and Social Security, for their own planning. Yet both these Committees set the 200 figure when there wasn't, and partly because there wasn't, any effective method of controlling inward migration.

If the Policy and Resources Committee's proposals for controlling inward migration are effective then there is no argument for copying a figure set on the basis of not having an effective means of controlling inward migration.

The 200 figure does not appear to have any substantive basis at all but will inevitably lead to sustained population growth against the expressed wishes of the people of Jersey.

Conclusion

9. I welcome the long overdue proposals in the form of right to residence and work licences so that inward migration can be effectively controlled but believe we must use these new controls for their rightful purpose, limiting population growth not encouraging it. I do not believe there are no additional financial or manpower implications from this amendment beyond those arising out of the original proposition.