

My name is Jeffrey Chinn and I am the managing director of our family business, Hettich Jewellers Limited.

We have been trading continuously for 118 years in the heart of St Helier at 1 King Street and, having seen good times, bad times, an occupation and all types of trading conditions, believe that we are in a good position to make a worthwhile contribution to your review. We would comment as follows:-

1. It is encouraging that SOJ is now showing an interest in retail. Even though it is one of the largest employment groups in the Island and is responsible for much of our social fabric, as well as the collection of GST, we have only ever heard talk of serious interest in our welfare. We've seen this plan and that plan over many years from SOJ but nothing coherent of any weight has been delivered to date. So this initiative is most welcome; let's hope it leads to something positive.
2. The rise of e-commerce is incredible. Consider the change in shopping habits that we have seen in the last 10 years. E-commerce has given us choice, convenience as well as great value but what it has done most of all is make shopping really easy. It means that you don't have to go the shops, you don't have to travel, you don't have battle with traffic and then find somewhere to park; e-commerce is a revolution! It is no wonder that traditional bricks and mortar retail has therefore suffered significantly and this is evidenced by the growing number of vacant retail sites. So how do we deal with this change to ensure that St Helier continues as a vibrant and attractive town?
 - The first thing that SOJ can do is ensure that access to St Helier is easy. That means good and effective traffic flow into and out of town, which is supported by quality parking in the right locations. It is argued that there is sufficient parking capacity in St Helier; however, the reality is that much of the parking is in the wrong place. Who wants to carry all of their shopping up to Pier Road car park on a wet and windy day? Parking has to be close to the centre if you want people to visit town. Anecdotally, the biggest complaint we have from our customers is that parking in St Helier is very difficult to find and they also find the varieties of payment methods confusing. So let's have quality parking that everybody understands.
 - Traffic flow in St Helier is now frequently painfully slow and this has been caused by the profusion of pedestrian crossings. These should be controlled by lights to allow for a fair flow of vehicles as well as people.
 - It is also in the public realm to ensure that St Helier is an attractive town with clean streets and pavements, where the street architecture is good and the town has a special feel. Signage in St Helier and around the Island has become very ordinary and like anywhere else in the UK. We should be proud to be different from the UK and our special island should reflect this. We have beautiful parks and gardens in St Helier; the rest of town should be as good.
 - Is there any vision and courage in SOJ to create something really bold, imaginative and beautiful for the people of Jersey? For example, Dundee has just unveiled its stunning new V&A museum, which has made world news, and what have we got? We have an outstanding opportunity on the Waterfront to build an iconic Jersey structure that will give us all something really special that we can be proud of forever. Is there a brave spirit in SOJ to do such a thing?

3. The de-minimus level should be scrapped. SOJ is now negligent in not collecting GST on all of the goods coming into Jersey. It is estimated that Amazon is probably the largest retailer in Jersey, with a turnover of perhaps £100 million. Putting it simply, that equates to £5 million that the SOJ is not collecting. I am not aware of any other country that has no tax barrier for the entry of goods, so why should Jersey be so open? SOJ must close this loophole without delay. Any business wishing to sell goods into Jersey must register for GST. The GST should be collected at the point of sale and the e-commerce retailer should make a quarterly return, just like local retailers do. The software exists to make this easy and SOJ has no excuse for not making this law. The benefit to the people of Jersey of the extra GST will be immense, with a welcome boost to public funds.
4. The new retail tax is badly thought out. The imposition of 20% on selected successful retailers is discriminatory and will act as a complete disincentive to new retail investment. We believe in paying taxes but we also believe that taxation should be fair for all. Why can we not have, for example, a 10% corporate tax rate across the board?
5. Employment conditions are challenging. It has never been easy to recruit in Jersey and finding good quality retail staff has always been difficult. The current population policy has only made this situation more critical and SOJ should really understand that we have to be able to hire the appropriate staff to help us run our businesses.
6. The Central Market is a jewel at the centre of St Helier. This covered iconic structure already exists and with the way that customers now search for experience surely more can be made of it to increase the attraction of St Helier.

To conclude. It is down to us, the retailers, restaurateurs, publicans etc to provide our customers with a fantastic customer experience. We have to be creative, well trained, well stocked with the right merchandise at the right price, and these are the areas that we can control. If we can give our customers what they want they will be back for more. The States of Jersey has much under its control and all we ask for is for SOJ to give us a level playing field and the right stage to perform on.

Jeffrey Chinn
Hettich Jewellers Ltd
1 King Street
JE2 4WF