

Dear Sir/Madam

I write to you in my capacity as Chairman of the Jersey Homes Trust to provide our response to the Common Population Policy which was published on 16 December 2021.

I have only been in post for a matter of days and hence have not had very long to read and digest the Policy. These are therefore preliminary views of the specific questions posed. Further, as I have not had an opportunity to discuss this with my fellow trustees, these views should be seen as my personal views rather than of the whole of the trustee group:

Is the proposed inaugural Common Population Policy fit for purpose?

As I understand the report, the overarching aim of the common population policy of the Council of Ministers is 'to progressively reduce Jersey's reliance on net inward migration within the currently agreed common strategic policy.' This is a statement with which I agree.

It is further stated that the Council of Ministers considers that the aim of its Common Population Policy should be to achieve a stable population position for Jersey, where reliance on inward migration has been significantly reduced in the longer term. The target date for achieving population stability will be set during the term of the next Council of Ministers, and subsequent Councils will publish details of their progress towards the stability target at least once during their term of office. Again, this is something with which I agree although there is no definition of what "stable population" means.

I am concerned, however, that the policy appears to stall at this point and the suggestion is that no detailed policy can be set until better data can be found to allow for decision-making. Data will never be perfect in this area, and the population issues have been well rehearsed in this document - they are not new issues for Jersey and they won't go away. I would expect the Council of Ministers to set a policy, be that net zero, or population stability (which needs to be defined), and to then use better data to amend or reinforce policy decisions as appropriate. We can't wait for the data to set the policy.

Is it suitable to ask the Council of Ministers to include its policy on population in future Government Plans from 2023 onwards?

Yes. A population policy is so fundamental to many of the decisions that the Council of Ministers will make, be it in housing, health, education, that it needs to sit at the centre of Government Plans.

Did you have ample opportunity to take part in the formation of the proposed policy?

No - but only because I have just been appointed.

Are there areas that the proposed policy does not provide guidance on?

A population target. As I have said above, the issues are well-known and been rehearsed for many years. I accept that the data needs to improve but we can't let that stand in the way or be an excuse for not setting a target. A policy without a target is not really a policy.

What will be the ongoing impact of the policy?

Not having a target, and therefore not having a policy, will mean that decisions are delayed. In the area of housing, specifically, it is accepted that on any modelling, even net zero, the demand for housing will increase. Any delay to the building of more affordable housing, both to buy and to rent, will exacerbate an issue which is already causing significant issues for countless Islanders.

If there is no delay then the impact should be, as stated, a focus on education, skills and learning to ensure that Islanders are equipped to do the jobs that local businesses are going to need, and grow our talent pipeline for the future. We will then be able to reduce reliance on our migrant workforce by maximising the contribution of the people who are already here. We will also focus on how we are going to house our population, provide them with adequate healthcare, and how we are going to pay for this as well as for an aging population.

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

As I have said above, I don't see this document as really setting a policy. I do, however, welcome the context, and believe that population policy is a key priority. I was also pleased to see the following statement "Truly reducing the Island's reliance on net inward migration as part of a sustainable population policy requires a joined-up approach across all Ministerial areas of responsibility."

A joined-up approach is essential. This will require some over-arching policies, population being one, which inform and guide decision-making by the Council of Ministers. There are always going to be competing priorities, particularly on an Island with limited resources, but that makes a joined-up approach even more important.

Is there sufficient reasoning behind the conclusion that it is premature to set any specific population target?

No - indeed for all of the data and issues raised I believe that it is critical for a target to be set. That can be amended once more data is available.

Kind regards

Philip Le Cornu
Chair - Jersey Homes Trust