

# **STATES OF JERSEY**



## **SITES OF SPECIAL INTEREST AND BUILDINGS OF LOCAL INTEREST: FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (P.166/2004) – COMMENTS**

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**Presented to the States on 23rd November 2004  
by the Environment and Public Services Committee**

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**STATES GREFFE**

## COMMENTS

Although the proposition refers to Sites of Special Interest generally, given the content of Deputy Rondel's report, the Committee assumes that his concerns are with buildings rather than natural SSIs. Its comments have been framed accordingly.

The notion of protecting the Island's built heritage has long been a feature of Jersey Law and Planning Policy and mirrors the attitudes of other responsible societies around the world. In November 1987, Jersey became a signatory to the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (the Granada Convention). The States had also affirmed its commitment to the protection of the Island's architectural and archaeological heritage by its endorsement of the relevant policies in the Island Plan.

The Convention introduces an obligation to take statutory measures to protect the architectural heritage – this is reflected in Article 9 of the Jersey Planning Law which makes provision for the designation of Sites of Special Interest. The Convention also recognises that it is not just buildings of outstanding architectural or historic worth that merit protection, but that more modest buildings are also vitally important. These provide the backcloth to more important monuments, help to create and reinforce local identity and enrich the quality of life. These objectives are reflected directly in Jersey in the grades of historic buildings that are included in the Committee's Register – Sites of Special Interest (SSIs), which are buildings of high intrinsic value, and Buildings of Local Interest (BLIs), which are more modest but are visually important in the local scene and have significance for the local community. Proposed Sites of Special Interest are those buildings recognised as having a high intrinsic value but which are awaiting statutory designation.

To clarify some misunderstandings in the proposition – BLIs are registered (i.e. included on the Register) and this is a material consideration in determining any planning application which affects its contribution to the amenities of Jersey; it is only SSIs that are designated, i.e. given statutory protection. There is no such grade as a proposed BLI as referred to in the proposition.

All buildings, whether registered or not, require maintenance and repair from time to time. The effect of a building's inclusion in the Register may involve its owner in some additional expense when such repairs are needed. The registration or designation of a building usually requires that these works are carried out using traditional materials and often precludes the use of artificial modern products such as uPVC windows and concrete roof tiles as these are considered to be damaging to the character of an historic building.

It is reasonable, therefore, for the owners of such buildings to have access to a system of grants or other financial incentives to assist in the cost of repairs and restoration. The Historic Building Repair Grant Scheme was introduced in 1997 to fulfil the relevant obligation of Granada Convention. The contribution by the States in 2004 was £75,000, and is awarded to individual applicants at the discretion of the Committee.

Grants are available to works on all registered buildings and are offered towards the repair or reinstatement of authentic historical features. Initially the grants were only available in relation to designated and proposed Sites of Special Interest, for which a grant is offered at a flat rate of 40% of the cost of eligible works up to £10,000. By statutory designation the interior of any SSI is also protected therefore interior repair works are also considered eligible.

In 2002 the Committee extended the grant scheme to include BLIs. The planning policies relating to BLIs are intended essentially to protect their external character and appearance; therefore grant can only be offered to assist with the cost of repair or restoration of external features. The ceiling for any individual grant offer for BLIs is set at a maximum of 30% of the cost of eligible works up to £7,500.

The grant scheme is audited by the Treasury and applicants are required to follow the procedures set out in the booklet 'Repair Grants to Historic Buildings'. Subject to funds being available, applications are judged on individual merit and any offer is calculated as a percentage of the cost of eligible works. The factors which are taken into consideration when determining an application and an appropriate percentage are –

- the circumstances of the application – for example, is the work likely to proceed at an appropriate

standard without grant assistance? (applicants may be asked to submit a statement explaining why their application is deserving of public funds);

- the situation of the building – prominent buildings, enjoyed by large numbers of passers-by, may attract a higher level of grant than more secluded buildings;
- the architectural value of the building;
- the extent to which the works enhance the architectural value of the building;
- the extent to which the works contribute to improving the quality or ambience of the wider surroundings.

In conclusion, it is recognised that the historic building repair grant scheme is a key element in the protection of Jersey's heritage. The scheme has evolved since 1997 with improvements in the way it is managed and distributed but the annual grant fund and consequently the amount of grant available to individual properties has either remained static or has been reduced. A full review of the grants scheme may be beneficial to its future effectiveness.

**The Committee is therefore happy to accept this proposition.**