

STATES OF JERSEY



PUBLIC HOLIDAYS: DESIGNATION OF 28TH SEPTEMBER FROM 2021 ONWARDS (P.102/2019) – COMMENTS

**Presented to the States on 6th December 2019
by the Council of Ministers**

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

There is no doubt that the 1769 ‘Corn Riots’ and the events around them marked an important moment in Jersey’s development, with significant and lasting consequences for the fair government of our Island.

However, as a historical event it remains relatively little known or understood, especially when compared to, for instance, the Battle of Jersey in 1781 and certainly Liberation Day.

There might be popular support for the general concept of an extra Bank Holiday, but it would be difficult to justify creating a new day off for an event that most people are unaware of. There is currently no demonstrated public demand for a holiday *specifically* to mark the Corn Riots.

Therefore, the Council of Ministers opposes part (a) of the proposition. However, Ministers do fully support the aspiration to teach more Islanders about their heritage and culture and is therefore in favour of part (d) of the proposition. Following the success of the inaugural event on 28th September 2019, the Council agrees that there should be an open day of the Royal Court and States Assembly building every year to commemorate this anniversary. In the short to medium term, building on this event and improving public awareness is a more appropriate way to commemorate the achievements of 28th September 1769. This event can take place at the weekend.

In relation to the funding requested in part (b), and notwithstanding the fact that the Government Plan debate has already been completed, the Council of Ministers would support the Privileges and Procedures Committee and the States Greffe if they wished to fund this request.

Equally, it would support the principle of teaching about the Corn Riots in our schools. In practice, this is the mandate of the Minister for Education and a decision for the Curriculum Council, which she chairs. The Jersey Curriculum, in both History and Citizenship, already requires schools to teach about Jersey history and our system of government. This is a direct extract –

“The Jersey Curriculum for citizenship aims to ensure that all pupils acquire a sound knowledge and understanding of how the States of Jersey is governed, its political system and how citizens participate actively in its democratic systems of government; develop a sound knowledge and understanding of the role of law and the justice system in our society and how laws are shaped and enforced.

Key Stage 3 pupils should be taught about the development of the political system of democratic government in Jersey and the United Kingdom, including the roles of citizens, the States Chamber, and the Island’s Relationship with the monarch.

Key Stage 4 pupils should be taught about parliamentary democracy and the key elements of the constitution of the Island of Jersey, including the power of government, the role of citizens and the States in holding those in power to account, and the different roles of the executive, legislature and judiciary and a free press.”

It is important to note that the Jersey Curriculum already gives teachers the scope to include events such as the Corn Riots if they wish. It sets out the principles of what pupils must learn in each subject area but is not prescriptive about the detail or exact content of lessons. This is a matter for schools and teachers. No further changes are needed to the wording of the curriculum for the Corn Riots to be included, so, due to the specific wording of this proposition, the Council of Ministers is unable to support part (c). Ministers do, however, recognise that schools need more information and assistance in order to deliver the lessons so it is suggested that the commemorations include, as a stated aim, the creation of high-quality, age-appropriate teaching resources for use in schools. Students could be involved in the process.

This issue is also being addressed by the Privileges and Procedures Committee, which is creating a new sub-committee specifically to look at political education for young people. The Minister for Education has agreed to be a member so that there is a direct link with Education and the Youth Service. The aim is to try to ensure that politics becomes an intrinsic part of the curriculum. The sub-committee, chaired by Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier, will also look at the information that is made available to all Islanders about the current political system in Jersey and how the public and young people, specifically, can get more involved in politics.

Returning to the subject of the bank holiday, it is important not to underestimate the impact of an extra day off on Jersey's wider economic health. Businesses would still have to pay wages and salaries but would lose one days' worth of revenue. Even if the business remains open, staff would be entitled to a compensatory day off at another time if they work on a bank holiday.

In terms of the Government and non-Ministerial departments, the cost of paying staff who would have otherwise worked is estimated as £1.38 million. This is not an additional cost to the Government. However, it does reflect the cost of a day's lost work. That work would either have to be covered by overtime payments, not done or added to the employees' workload for when they return to work.

A detailed analysis by the Government has produced the following –

Estimated cost of unworked salary payments	£1,374,729
Estimated cost of additional shift payments/rates	£115,791
Estimated total 'cost' of bank holiday to Government of Jersey	£1,490,520

It is difficult to reach a definitive figure for overall impact potentially incurred across the community of a bank holiday. While an extra holiday might shift the timing of some sales and expenditure, in some sectors, a missed day cannot be made up again. A cafe that relies on lunchtime trade from employees in the office complex next door will lose a day's trade that cannot be recouped. The Jersey Chamber of Commerce is particularly concerned about the effect on smaller businesses and those experiencing difficulties. It has estimated that each extra day could cost the economy up to £10 million in lost wages and productivity. Based on the average GVA per working day (minus property rental), it is also estimated by the Government's economists that in the worst-case scenario a bank holiday could 'cost' £18 million, which would equate to a day's economic activity being lost.

In view of these points, the Council of Ministers cannot support part (a) of the proposition.

Statement under Standing Order 37A [Presentation of comment relating to a proposition]

These comments were submitted to the States Greffe after the noon deadline as set out in Standing Order 37A in order that final review processes could be completed.