

COMMISSION AMICALE: ANNUAL REPORT

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by the Commission Amicale**

STATES OF JERSEY

STATES GREFFE

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COMMISSION AMICALE: REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 31st DECEMBER 1999

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The States established the Commission Amicale in 1995, following the closure of the French Consulate in Jersey in the early 1990s, with the aim of reinforcing cultural and commercial links between Jersey and France.
- 1.2 The Conseil Régional de Basse Normandie and the Conseil Général de la Manche opened an office, the Maison de Normandie et de la Manche, in Halkett Place, St. Helier, in 1996, and following a period with seconded officer in Caen, it was decided to establish a Jersey office there, and it opened its doors on 15th July 1998.

2. Objectives in 1999

- 2.1 The objectives of the Jersey delegation for 1999, to be met in partnership with its French counterparts, other States' Committees and the private sector, were as follows -
- (a) the Jersey Office in Caen to be maintained in order to provide advice and information about the Island, and to encourage the development of commercial and cultural links between Jersey and Lower Normandy;
 - (b) the Chargé de Mission will develop his rôle in opening and strengthening links between the two regions, and provide written reports to the Jersey delegation on the progress of work of the office to monitor its contribution and effectiveness;
 - (c) communication to continue on discrete areas of mutual interest between the two authorities, to include the development of commerce, educational exchanges, cultural events and political links;
 - (d) the Jersey delegation extended an invitation to members of the Conseil Général de la Manche to Jersey on 18th June 1999;
 - (e) the Jersey delegation to continue to support the primary school assistants' programme until May 1999;
 - (f) the Jersey delegation to endeavour to support cultural initiatives between the two regions.

The Jersey delegation continued to endeavour to -

- (g) support sporting and cultural events; and
- (h) strengthen links at a political level to help smooth relationships in less visible areas of diplomacy.

3. Commission Amicale activities

3.1. Educational exchanges

- 3.1.1 The Jersey delegation continued to support, jointly with the Education Committee, two primary school assistants from Caen University in Jersey primary schools. Reports from the Assistant Director, Primary Phase advised that during their stay, they had worked daily in twenty schools for an average of six weeks at a time, and suggested that the assistants were highly valued by the schools. From September 1999, the Education Committee undertook to take forward this programme without assistance from the Jersey delegation. This was a necessary step at that time, as the delegation had insufficient funds to assist further, but was pleased to have been able to encourage the initiative.
- 3.1.2 Following an initiative of the Jersey delegation in 1998, the Education Department, the University of Caen and the University of Portsmouth entered into an agreement for the promotion of Studies in Financial Management. This scheme had among its objectives encouraging Jersey students to undertake specialised financial studies with a view to obtaining a qualification adapted to the needs of the sponsoring bank; encouraging such students, having successfully completed their studies, to remain within the Island as young professionals; to increase the local pool of dynamic, well-educated young people capable of achieving high standards, and offering to Jersey students wishing to specialise in Finance activities access to a structured programme of studies including tuition in French, this with a view to encouraging active connections between the Island and the Caen region, through access to the Institut Universitaire Professionnalisé Banque-Assurance of Caen.
- 3.1.3 Following input from the Maison de Jersey, video links were agreed between the Jersey College for Girls and

Victoria College and schools in France, and the Jersey Hospitality Association established a link with the Lycée Hôtelier Notre Dame de Nazaret in Douvres-La-Délivrande, with a view to placing students in Jersey hotels as part of their courses.

3.2 Cultural events

3.2.1 Twinnings: In October, the Parish of St. Ouen was twinned with Coutances, making a total of seven Jersey parishes twinned with communes in Lower Normandy. The Jersey Delegation continues to believe that twinings are an effective way of promoting exchanges at grass-roots level, and encourages parishes to twin with towns in France.

3.2.2 The Jersey delegation endeavours to assist small groups or organisations, and in 1999 made a grant to assist the Alliance Française in the launch of its newsletter.

3.3 Political links

3.3.1 In October 1998, the Jersey delegation received an invitation for all States Members to meet with the Conseil Général de la Manche at their seat of government in St. Lô. As a direct result of the visit, a meeting was arranged between French politicians and their Jersey counterparts in Jersey in February 1999 to discuss the establishment of closer links between the regions, and to discuss the economic infrastructure necessary to open new commercial and trade links with the département de la Manche. These discussions included an investigation of outsourcing, and the legal and fiscal issues which could arise. It was anticipated that the information gathered during this exercise would be equally valuable for other regions of France as well.

3.3.2 At the meeting of 26th February 1999, the delegation of the Manche Executive Committee led by Député Cousin met a number of States members, and it was decided to set up a working party to consider the opportunities for outsourcing with the following terms of reference -

(1) to identify, examine and evaluate -

(a) the potential that existed for the outsourcing of public and private sector activities from Jersey to Lower Normandy; and

(b) the difficulties to be overcome when outsourcing operations (e.g. legal, fiscal and transport);

(2) to discuss how the authorities in Jersey, the Manche Department and the region of Lower Normandy might work together to facilitate outsourcing proposals;

(3) to initiate proposals by contacting the appropriate bodies and individuals in the public and private sectors.

3.3.3 The delegation invited Mr. M. Bralsford, together with Mrs. N. Bismillah, International Relations and Policy Officer, Policy and Resources Department, and the former Normandy Project Officer, Mr. J.M.E. Harris, Human Resources Department to be members of the Working Party, or Groupe de Travail, chaired by Mr. C. Powell, O.B.E., Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Policy and Resources Committee.

3.3.4 The Groupe de Travail first met on 14th June 1999, at which time it agreed its terms of reference. It decided that the best way forward was for the Jersey delegation to prepare three models for outsourcing projects. The next meeting was to be held in Caen. The Jersey delegation prepared the three models as requested and submitted them to the French delegation. Subsequent meetings, however, were unfortunately cancelled due to a French initiative on restructuring their own internal regional and general economic policy. The French have now undergone their consultative process, and the next meeting of the Groupe de Travail is scheduled for 17th May 2000.

3.3.5 The Jersey delegation extended a return invitation to the Conseil Général de la Manche to Jersey, and this visit took place on 18th June 1999, when the Jersey delegates also took the opportunity to explain Jersey's political history and something of the current structure. During this meeting, the President of the Conseil Général, Sénateur Le Grand suggested that Jersey might wish to give consideration to reaching an agreement in the future with the Granville authorities in view of the harbour development presently being undertaken there which would lead to a capability to accommodate larger vessels than at present. Reference was made to an agreement which had been established between the Brittany authorities and the Dorset County Council in relation to a regular service which had been introduced between those two locations.

3.3.6 The Maison de Jersey and the Maison de la Normandie et de la Manche continue to work together, and have agreed

to establish a joint bilingual website to present the two establishments and their regions, as well as providing useful information on relevant topics. It was proposed to establish links with other sites, notably tourism sites.

4. Activities of the Maison de Jersey in 1999

4.1 Maison de Jersey - funding

4.1.1 During 1999, the Jersey Delegation had a limited budget, and the joint funding of the office in Caen with the Jersey Electricity Company Limited was added to by grants from both the Trade and Industry Sub-Committee and the Telecommunications Board, making the running of an office possible, on the following terms -

- (i) the contribution from the Telecommunications Board was made on the basis that the funding was to be used to develop possible information technology links, with reports from the Maison de Jersey on progress in this regard;
- (ii) the contribution from the Trade and Industry Sub-Committee had been made in 1998 and continued in 1999 on the following conditions -
 - (a) that a guide should be prepared covering all aspects of conducting business with France;
 - (b) that contact with the Chambers of Commerce of St. Malo and Rennes should be made and maintained;
 - (c) that there should be quarterly reports on any business links-related activity for the information of the Sub-Committee;
 - (d) that a database should be set up and maintained relating to business links with France.

4.1.2 During the course of 1999, the Finance and Economics Committee approved appropriate funding for the Commission Amicale, and with the agreement of the Policy and Resources Committee, it was agreed to transfer the administration of the Bureau de Jersey Limited to the Policy and Resources Department with effect from 2000, together with sufficient funding, alongside the contribution of the Jersey Electricity Company, for the Maison to function without the need for additional grants.

5. Main activities of the Maison de Jersey

5.1 Commerce

5.1.1 Of all the enquiries received by the Maison de Jersey in 1999 (500 in total), some from areas outside the immediate catchment area, 60 per cent were tourism-related. Following the closure of the Jersey Tourism office in Paris, Jersey Tourism maintained a French brochure request line, and in 1999 also included the telephone number of the Maison de Jersey in its literature.

5.1.2 The Chargé de Mission commenced an initiative with Aurigny Air Services and the Jersey Museums Service, and the Mémorial and Office du Tourisme in Caen to try and build greater links. This was worked on jointly by the Chargé de Mission and Jersey Tourism. However, following the withdrawal of Aurigny Air Services, the initiative was not pursued.

5.1.3 A number of enquiries relating to import-export and the building industry have been handled, from general enquiries to requests for market research.

5.1.4 It is possible that the next area of development may be e-commerce, and following the decision of the French and Jersey delegations to the Commission on 15th July 1999 to progress a joint website, the Maison de Jersey was asked to research the implications of French legislation as regards e-commerce, and discovered similarities with United Kingdom legislation. The IS/IT Advisor was approached and is willing to assist in the creation of the website so that it could advertise e-commerce opportunities in Jersey and link into the Jersey Information Society Commission. This could perhaps be achieved by outsourcing the website creation. In addition, initial agreement has been reached to set up a pilot scheme to link to the European Judicial network giving access to judicial papers emanating from Brussels. The IS/IT Advisor is ready to assist in this project when it is progressed further.

5.1.5 To help develop trade and commerce in the future, the research undertaken by the Maison de Jersey on developing trade links with France could be made more widely available to assist business to expand in France. The Maison de

Jersey has researched the French system, the different bodies involved with various functions and contact details and other relevant information so as to provide Jersey businesses with concrete and practical information on how opportunities may be developed. This was indeed one of the conditions on which the Trade and Industry Sub-Committee made grants in 1998 and 1999.

5.1.6 The language barrier remains an obstacle, and translation services can be expensive for the small business. The Alliance Française does provide language courses, along with many other providers, and can provide a more affordable translation service.

5.2 Education

5.2.1 In addition to the initiatives mentioned later in this report, frequent contacts have been made with the Maison de Jersey by students requiring placement abroad as part of their Higher Education course and Jersey, due to its proximity, has been very appealing to them. There are two main differences between students from Jersey being considered in France, and from France to Jersey. Firstly, the States of Jersey do not subsidise the employer as is the case in France. Secondly, students working in Jersey on a six-month placement have been considered employees rather than students under the Regulation of Undertakings and Development (Jersey) Law 1973, as amended.

5.2.2 There is scope for students to complete research while on work placement to the mutual benefit of student and business, and two French students, one working for a States department in Jersey and one carrying out research in France on behalf of a local private business, completed research projects locally in 1999. A business school in Caen has many students each year who need to undertake research for their BTS Commerce International courses.

5.2.3 In the hospitality sector, students from French catering colleges are required to complete placements abroad. The Jersey Hospitality Association has agreed to pursue a link with a catering college near Caen with a view to making regular placements of trained individuals in local hotels, and has been assisted in this regard by the Maison.

5.2.4 While school trips to France either in the form of exchanges or to activity centres continue, it has become more difficult to lead such activity groups to France because of tighter regulation. To some extent, exchanges are being replaced by video links and e-mailing between schools twinned for this purpose. Most recently, the Jersey College for Girls has been twinned with a school in Argentan.

5.3 Employment

5.3.1 In addition to the initiatives described under 'Education' the Maison has assisted the Jersey Hospitality Association, which has had increasing difficulty in filling its vacancies in recent times, in tapping into the French employment market through national employment agencies and specific catering magazines.

5.4 Environment

5.4.1 The Maison has liaised with the nuclear installations close to Jersey to ensure an appropriate and timely exchange of information by COGEMA with the Environmental Adviser, Policy and Resources Department, for his assessment. The presence of a French-speaking officer in France has been helpful to clarify with COGEMA what the Jersey authorities required of them, and to assist them in the local public relations.

5.4.2 The Maison de Jersey assisted Planning and Building Services by organising a student placement with that department, which resulted in a report on planning procedures and authorities in France, considerations of historical buildings management and the use of zinc, identifying possible French suppliers.

5.4.3 The Maison de Jersey has provided information to the Public Services Department on possible suppliers for a range of street furniture, but more specifically on the future developments of French waste disposal infrastructures.

5.4.4 Many of these instances relate to researching who is responsible for what in each region, and putting bodies in touch with one another

5.5 Culture

5.5.1 The Maison de Jersey has played a rôle in developing links between the two regions with the aim of attracting international street theatre performers and a theatre ship to Jersey, and encouraging greater co-operation between the Arts Councils of the Channel Islands and the nearest French neighbours to attract events that would otherwise be closed to the Island by reason of cost.

5.5.2 The Maison de Jersey was also able to assist in a variety of other areas, for example, liaison between the Caen Tourism department and Memorial Museum and the Jersey Museum Service and Jersey Tourism with a view to joint research, operations and marketing and targeting initiatives in areas where there was mutual interest. There appeared to be scope also for making information available on cultural events held in Jersey from one central location, and this was supported by both the Jersey Arts Centre and the Jersey Museum Service. It was suggested that the Maison de Jersey could act as the collator of information on cultural activity, subject to resources.

6. Commission Amicale projects for 2000

6.1 The Jersey delegation is keen to build on the successes of creating links with Normandy, and to respond to the needs of industry and commerce, by separately extending its area of influence to include establishing links on a more formal level with Brittany.

6.2 The Jersey delegation has approved the following additional projects for 2000 -

- (a) to open up talks with Brittany, after consultation with the Industries Committee, with the aim of increasing opportunities for trade between the regions;
- (b) to promote, in conjunction with appropriate representative bodies, the production of a guide covering relevant aspects of conducting business with France in line with the request of the former Trade and Industry Sub-Committee;
- (c) to develop a website as an information resource, and to seek to advertise e-commerce opportunities in Jersey and link into the Jersey Information Society Commission;
- (d) to develop further links in the field of arts and heritage, for example, by the encouragement of choral groups;
- (e) to encourage the further twinning of Parishes with French towns;
- (f) to endeavour to ensure that French students on work placements in Jersey of periods up to a limit of six months are exempt under the Regulation of Undertakings and Development (Jersey) Law 1973, as amended, so that exchanges of mutual benefit to students and employers alike can be pursued;
- (g) to seek to increase opportunities for French students to undertake research on behalf of local bodies/organisations; and
- (h) to continue with the work begun in previous years.

7. Conclusion

7.1 The Jersey delegation continues to see value in forging links between Jersey and its near neighbours, for mutual benefit, in line with the aim of reinforcing cultural and commercial links between Jersey and France. For the next period, the Jersey delegation hopes to begin talks with the Brittany, with which there are strong transport links, to improve trade between the two regions. In this area, as in all areas, the Jersey delegation sees its rôle as being that of a facilitator. If opportunities for developing trade or commerce emerge from these discussions, such opportunities should be taken forward, as they see fit, by the Industries, Policy and Resources, or other relevant Committees.