



ALDERNEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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President's Report 2023 Andrew Eggleston

It has been a year of consolidation creating relationships with our States and the newer recently elected States members, setting up new Chamber groups, namely the Hospitality Group and the Alderney Post Board, and being involved with the Guernsey States relating to the proposed extension to our runway.

Following on from the enthusiastic introduction of the Hospitality Group (discussed further below), we are now focussing on setting up three more important stand-alone groups under the Chamber umbrella – eCommerce/finance, retail and construction.

We are all aware of the absolute importance of enticing new business and relocating existing business to the island. As such, Chamber has spent a considerable time this year formulating a "Guide to Setting up a Business in Alderney – 10 Simple Steps." This was on the suggestion of the States of Alderney – we acted straightaway. This work is now linked with the Economic Development Committee to promote Alderney as "Open for Business."

It is interesting to realise that Chamber now has 152 paid-up businesses. This accounts for almost all those working on the island – and once again, our annual membership fee remains at £25 a year (just under 7p a day!).

A synopsis of salient points during the year

Communication You may have noticed that our emails are now sent under two separate banners. The one solely headed Chamber is material that we are sending from internal sources while the joint headed banner of Chamber and States of Alderney offers all the official media releases. We also send out the occasional survey to members. This all takes much time and I thank Ilona Soane-Sands as being primarily responsible for organising this important sector of Chamber.

Our Airport Without wishing to trawl down into a morass of minutiae, the consensus within Chamber is for a longer runway and has been from the start. The foundation for this has simply been to future proof our island for the coming decades. Without an extended runway we are incapable of having a medevac service. Keeping to the current length of 877 metres, are there any commercial airlines that would grant us a reliable service? Where would our economy be if we stayed still?

We have enjoyed several meetings this year with Aurigny CEO Nico Bezuidenhout and are especially pleased to pass on that there should be an extra 30-35 Southampton sectors this summer. We are also in the early stages of discussing seasonal package deals.

It has been interesting to note a very recent paper from a Guernsey group that has already publicly stated that Alderney does not need a lengthened airport for its future economy YET confirms that Guernsey needs a longer runway for its own future economy!

I would especially like to thank Beth Chapman, Holly Chandler and Ian Corder on behalf of their respective families who flew to Guernsey to present to Guernsey Deputies their reasons for an extended runway which centred around the young of the island, its future economy. We were all impressed at the number of Deputies who attended this lunchtime presentation before their States sat that afternoon to discuss the matter.

One Guernsey Deputy has recently said that the longer such important decisions were delayed, the more they will cost as Guernsey is now considering borrowing at ever increasing percentages as the base rate continues to rise. We now hear that the July debate on major developments is to be put back to September. All so frustrating no matter which side of the fence one sits on.

Hospitality Group This is a new venture brought into being just a few weeks ago under the umbrella of Chamber. Along with others, I remember the Hotel & Guest House Association and The Licensed Victuallers Association – both of which disbanded several years ago. We agreed to revitalise it in a more all-encompassing way to include all businesses within the hospitality sector including hotels, guest houses, self-catering, camp site, restaurants and cafes.

Following a recent very well attended breakfast meeting by almost all within the sector, it is now going to start moving ahead as one entity and under the lead of Council member Holly Chandler.

Alderney Post Board This is another group we have recently resurrected. It is basically a sounding board for ideas and comments that will be forwarded to Guernsey Post. In recent years, it has been an annual meeting with chief executive Boley Smiley and other representatives of Guernsey Post. Our wish is to make it a more proactive body to discuss all postal matters on a regular basis. Sitting on this board will be Ian Corder, Nigel Lawrence, Hilius Pretorius and myself.

'The Black Hole' and GST We have all been made aware of a deficit within Guernsey's treasury – as to the precise amount, we remain in the dark. We consider the GST debate, as it was referred to, was not marketed in the most positive fashion. It was a package as we well know, not just GST on its own.

The result of a survey by Chamber on the subject was comprehensively against the introduction of GST. We therefore could not side with The States that was backing the concept of GST.

Secondary Pension Scheme This was a well-attended lunchtime meeting presented to Chamber by Paul McCormick of Gower advising us of all aspects of this scheme that will be introduced next year and will be applicable to employers and employees alike. Unfortunately at this time of inflation, it will be another 'tax' to bear.

Guernsey Chamber of Commerce We are building a closer working relationship with the Guernsey Chamber to identify and address mutual issues and possible solutions.

Alderney Wildlife Trust A few weeks ago Council was invited to attend a meeting with AWT director Nigel Clarke, community support officer Abigail de Castella and Ramsar officer Alex Purdie. This was at their shop/office in Victoria Street. The prime purpose was to create a more unified approach and relationship between our two bodies. Many topics were covered including the wish to expand and diversify the existing Single Use Plastics Group. Abigail then forwarded a brief survey that was recently sent to our members.

Representation on States Committees / Groups We continue to foster a sound working relationship with our States. At present, Ian Corder has input into the States Energy Group, we sit on the Harbour Users Group, have a presence on the recently formed States Economic Development Committee, and I remain a member of the States Good Governance Group. Our continued call to the States is that we are here to assist. Our business community has vast experience in the economic workings of the island.

Sea Transport - freight and passenger Chamber is pleased to have as members Alderney Shipping Co, Alderney Ferry Services Ltd with Dan and Charlie, and Access Challenger & ex RNLI lifeboat Annie Blaker with Buz and Tess. This weather dependent service that they provide is second to none.

Summer Season 2023 As the holiday season will very soon be at its peak we all want Alderney to look at its best. We would ask the States to consider tidying certain areas – a prime example being the discarded fridges, freezers, old tyres etc. that stand by the road opposite the power station. Couldn't they simply be placed at the opposite end of the recycling shed?

Is it not worth considering bringing back a round-the-island bus service during the height of the season. It would probably need to be subsidised but it should be seen as an integral part of our infrastructure for tourists to gain easier access to the beaches, the Odeon and the Nunnery towards the east part of the island.

In conclusion The sheer volume of emails, meetings and conversations constantly carried out by all Council members is testament to the interest and drive we all have for the island.

I hope we all enjoy a positive year ahead, both economically and socially, and, as we have said many times over the years, we are always open to conversation and ideas. Members do not have to be on the Council to join in. We can, and do, co-opt on to our groups. Just let us know if you are interested to be a voice with us.

Our Council of 6 (excluding treasurer Tony Haywood and our honorary secretary Lesley Chapman) works hard to fulfil as much as is possible. Not all meetings take place after work, so time has to be taken from our businesses – all on a voluntary basis. I would therefore like to thank Ilona, Holly, Nigel, Ian and Brendan for working with myself during another interesting year.

My best wishes

Andrew