



ALDERNEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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President's Report 2024 by Andrew Eggleston

Our aim to be ever more open within our increasing membership, we have taken to circulating monthly notes this year on what Council is discussing – and, as ever, we ask for feedback on any of the topics.

We retain our positive relationship with the States and are invited to attend the recently formed **Economic Development Committee** on a monthly basis and enjoy occasional meetings with individual States Members and Civil Service. Within Chamber we have **sub groups** that also include members not on Council – the transport group, the hospitality group, the energy group and the media group. We are also about to create a construction group.

All this work is voluntary and takes more time than many may think. We are always looking to our membership for thoughts & ideas and for volunteering to join our groups or Council.

Leasehold Mortgages. The importance of keeping younger people on the island is key to the island's future. There remains a most elementary stumbling block that results in those wishing to buy property at the lower end as their first home are unable to buy flats – unless they are fortunate in not having to borrow. This is simply because the law is not in place in Alderney that would allow banks to lend on leasehold properties and therefore take a first charge. Council members Nicky Burland and myself have taken this on and are presently in dialogue with Guernsey Advocates where such a law is in place. We have also approached our States several times on this subject over the past 18 months or so.

Within the tourism sector, our recently formed **Hospitality Group** under the lead of Holly Chandler is a success that will continue to be built on. Caroline Gauvain who heads Visit Alderney in town is an integral part of this group along with States Member Boyd Kelly who heads Tourism. The workload within Visit Alderney is quite overwhelming in which Caroline needs a number two as we in Chamber have been pressing the States to resolve. **Advertising Alderney** in any of its sectors is so critical to the island.

Much of our conversation revolves around the island's **transport structure**. We are delighted to see that Dan and Charlie now have two 12-seater boats and can offer an expanding service including France.

The word 'transport' obviously brings us around to our **runway**. Notwithstanding the wish to lengthen the runway, it is paramount to repair the ever-desperate condition of the 877 metres that we have. Despite the States of Guernsey agreeing several years ago to overhaul and relay the existing with central lighting etc., and despite the States of Guernsey agreeing a couple of years ago to lengthen our runway, absolutely nothing has happened except for the continuing expensive use of a UK company whose task is to simply patch.

We keep saying this can't go on – but it does. We don't have the runway length to receive a dedicated medevac such as the type that Gama uses. We just continue take out one of our commercial Dorniers which, although absolutely necessary for this purpose, must create commercial frustration for Aurigny and we passengers alike.

There is presently a veil of silence over the matter – probably the most important matter for decades. We can understand the need for confidentiality while internal discussions take place, but the longer this continues, the more concerned we all become. Alderney's destiny relies on a robust and reliable transport structure.

Ultimately there are two outcomes – we either have a longer runway or we don't. But what is critical is that if Guernsey's Policy & Resources Committee does a 180 degree turnaround and has no appetite to lengthen, then **there must be a Plan B** ready to implement.

Our absolute wish is for **Aurigny** to remain as our carrier. It is the safest conclusion for our island. Smaller airlines have come and gone over the years – and that was when we had a structurally sound runway!

We hope that Guernsey will not continue to prevaricate and will conclude a finite decision before their next island-wide election.

Looking back over my past 18 president's reports, transport rears its head every time – as does the need for a **marina**, a way forward for the crumbling **Fort Tourgis** and a proper role for **Fort Grosnez**. Do we run too quickly to employ the expensive services of **consultants**, each time at a cost of many thousands of pounds? Do we actually make use of these reports so they justify their expense and do we take on board their conclusions and act positively on them?

Chamber has recently taken up the cudgel to advertise Alderney as a destination to work, live and holiday. This has been led by Council member Vanessa Main. By now all members will have received an email relating to our advertising campaign on **Island FM** for two 30 second adverts to be aired from Mondays to Fridays for a six week period. We considered Guernsey to be the logical starting point taking into account its higher population, its proximity to ourselves and our being in the same Bailiwick re fiscal and tax issues. It's a very simple move from there to here.

As you are now aware, the funding for this exercise is looking at **just 140 'units' at £25**. We are simply advertising Alderney – not mentioning any business. As we say – **help us to help Alderney**.

St Anne's School's idea of a **Careers Fair** earlier this year was a resounding success with participants being organised by Chamber. The prime reason was to show pupils that Alderney offers a diversity of jobs that are on our doorstep. This will now be an annual event combining the School and Chamber. Council member Nicky Burland was our driving force to guarantee the day's success.

Another very positive first was last month's **Social Media Workshop** which was organised and hosted by Chamber and was aimed at Alderney's business community. This event was headed by Council member Ian Corder and featured presentations by Chamber members who are actively involved in social media marketing. Because of this success, follow-up workshops will be held.

The **Alderney Postal Board** has been resurrected under the lead of Council member Nigel Lawrence. Meetings are held with the CEO of Guernsey Post and colleagues to iron out problems / comments from the Alderney point of view. We did stress at the outset that we were not pleased that the Post Office moved out of town. It appears that time was of the essence to find an alternative premise.

Together with the States, Chamber continues to work on a forthcoming **two-day presentation in Guernsey** initially organised by Guernsey Finance Ltd to attract companies in the finance sector to consider moving to Alderney or to relocate their back office work.

The words **pedestrian precinct** cause comments poles apart! We are all aware that Victoria Street is not 'browser friendly' with its narrow pavements that too many vehicles use as an extension to the road itself. We consider it is time to wind the clock back to when it was a pedestrian precinct to allow tourists – and ourselves – to enjoy the street in a higher degree of safety.

Perhaps just a few hours in the morning and only in the height of the season to gauge reaction. This has already been discussed between ourselves and Economic Development as a result of which we have been asked to discuss this concept further at a General Services meeting which has recently instigated a Traffic Advisory Group following the recent States' survey.

Other topics we have been discussing include **Freedom of Information, lack of Duty Free, lack of Avgas** at the airport for private planes, and a return to **mandatory registration** within the hospitality sector where the States used to pick up information weekly from our hotels, guest houses and self-catering to establish where tourists came from and therefore where to focus on future advertising etc.

One topic that is becoming more prevalent comes under the common theme of **traffic** – parking, size of vehicles, state of roads.

Parking because it seems we can all park anywhere for any length of time – *not good*

Size of vehicles because as they get ever larger and especially wider (can't be necessary!), pavements become a part of the road – *not good*

Condition of roads because they are coming out in sympathy with our airport runway as they break up – *not good*

I would like to mention **Nicky Burland** and **Vanessa Main** who joined us last year as Council Members. Their input, interest and drive have been superb. Council also includes **Ian Corder** who has been a driving force within digital, transport and energy subjects while **Ilona Soane-Sands**, **Holly Chandler** and **Patrick Puddle**, as co-opted members on the Council, have yet again brought in their expertise in the media, hospitality and transport. **Nigel Lawrence**, **Brendan Noone** and **myself** have to stand down in accordance with our constitution but can, of course, offer themselves for a further period.

In conclusion, it has been another busy, full and rewarding year managed and conducted by we six Council members and three co-opted members whose sole direction is for a better economic outlook within our business community which ultimately results in a positive knock-on effect around the whole island.

My best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Eggleston', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Andrew Eggleston

President 2024