

THE STATES OF DELIBERATION
of the
ISLAND OF GUERNSEY

COMMITTEE *for* EDUCATION, SPORT & CULTURE

FUNDING TO SUPPORT THE GUERNSEY LANGUAGE

The States are asked to decide:-

Whether, after consideration of the policy letter entitled FUNDING TO SUPPORT THE GUERNSEY LANGUAGE dated 25th June, 2020, they are of the opinion:-

1. To note the Committee *for* Education, Sport & Culture's intentions with respect to the Guernsey Language Commission, as detailed in sections 4 and 5 of this policy letter; and agree to the Committee *for* Education, Sport & Culture making a total grant of £300,000 to the Guernsey Language Commission; and direct the Policy & Resources Committee to recommend Cash Limits for the Committee *for* Education, Sport & Culture for 2021, 2022 and 2023 that include specific additional funding of £100,000 for each of those years for this purpose.

The above propositions have been submitted to Her Majesty's Procureur for advice on any legal or constitutional implications in accordance with Rule 4(1) of the Rules of Procedure of the States of Deliberation and their Committees.

THE STATES OF DELIBERATION
of the
ISLAND OF GUERNSEY

COMMITTEE *for* EDUCATION, SPORT & CULTURE

FUNDING TO SUPPORT THE GUERNSEY LANGUAGE

The Presiding Officer
States of Guernsey
Royal Court House
St Peter Port

25th June, 2020

Dear Sir

1 Executive Summary

1.1 Guernésiais is the indigenous language of Guernsey and is critically endangered. The number of fluent speakers has declined to the point that it could cease to be spoken at all within a few years. The Committee *for* Education, Sport & Culture intends to establish a Guernsey Language Commission with a mandate first to halt and then reverse this decline. The States are asked to approve a total grant of £300,000 to be paid over the next three years as seed funding for this Commission.

2 Our Language – Our Unique Identity

2.1 The island’s 20-year vision is that that **we will be among the happiest and healthiest places in the world, where everyone has equal opportunity to achieve their potential; and we will be a safe and inclusive community, which nurtures its unique heritage and environment and is underpinned by a diverse and successful economy.** In the 2019 update to the Policy and Resource Plan¹, the Committee re-stated its commitment that one of its priorities was to present ‘...a plan to support the local language (Guernésiais) to the States’.

2.2 The island’s 20-year vision has not changed, and the Recover Strategy - Revive and Thrive: Our Recovery Strategy for Guernsey Together², which at the time of writing awaits debate by the States, proposes to build on that vision through a

¹ Policy & Resource Plan - 2018 Review and 2019 Update, Billet d’État IX of June 2019

² Revive and Thrive: Our Recovery Strategy for Guernsey Together, Billet d’État XIV of June 2020

set of Guiding Principles, including:

‘ We Care About Our Islands

We are blessed with a rich and diverse natural environment and a unique AngloNorman cultural heritage. We should nurture these to support environmental and community renewal, our economic diversification, and to promote the Bailiwick as a unique part of the world.’

In the context of the Recovery Action Plans, which are proposed to sit below the Recovery Strategy, there is mention of the Assembly renewing its commitment to:

‘nurturing our natural environment and unique heritage.’

- 2.3 Guernésiais forms part of our island’s unique identity and the heritage of the people of Guernsey. In the opinion of the Committee, this generation, through the States, must assume responsibility for maintaining the links between the island’s indigenous language and islanders’ sense of identity. As part of the commitment to recover successfully from the challenges of recent months, the States should be more cognisant than ever of how the island’s unique language can be used to help define our distinctive identity, to foster a sense of belonging and connection to the island and to nurture a positive sense of wellbeing in the community.
- 2.4 Guernésiais is a variety of Norman French. The language is Guernsey’s link to the Norman Empire, which at its heyday stretched from Norway to Syria. The vocabulary and syntax of Guernésiais contain clear evidence of Norse linguistic heritage, combined with local Romance dialects derived from everyday Latin, and with some Celtic influence. It is related to modern French, as it is to other Romance languages, but predates it. A form of Romance language has been spoken in Guernsey for nearly 2000 years. Over time a language evolved independently into what became a distinct variety of Norman.
- 2.5 In 1204, King John of England lost the Duchy of Normandy to King Philippe II of France, retaining only the Channel Islands. No immediate attempt was made to introduce either the English language or English law into the island and the variety of Norman we know as Guernésiais remained as the everyday tongue of the majority of islanders until well into the nineteenth century. This extended into the twentieth century for some, and many people in the rural parishes who were born before the outbreak of WWII were ‘monoglot’ (only spoke Guernésiais) or it was their native language. They acquired English at school or in England following evacuation. Thereafter, improved trade links and more regular transport services led to increasingly frequent contact between Guernsey and the British mainland and hence to the start of the language shift. The inroads

made by English in the nineteenth century continued apace in the twentieth. The States of Guernsey adopted English for ordinary business in 1926.

- 2.6 Guernésiais is often not thought of as a written language, but it has a substantial body of literature. This includes the works by Georges Métivier (1790-1881), featuring several volumes of Guernésiais poetry and his monumental dictionary of Guernésiais (1870). Denys Corbet (1826-1909) also made important contributions. The nineteenth-century Norman literary climate in the Channel Islands was so flourishing that it is usually credited with inspiring the resurgence of Norman literary writing in the Cherbourg Peninsula at this time.
- 2.7 Thanks to the efforts of the translator Thomas Martin (1839-1921) Guernésiais can also lay claim to a translation of the Bible, all the plays of Shakespeare and many of the plays of Longfellow, Molière, Pierre Corneille, Thomas Corneille and Voltaire. More recent Guernésiais writers include Hélier d’Rocquôine, Hazel Tomlinson and Marjorie Ozanne. The English-Guernésiais dictionary edited by Marie De Garis has been republished in its 4th edition (2012).
- 2.8 The evacuation of significant numbers of islanders prior to the German Occupation meant that, for the best part of five years, many of Guernsey’s children did not grow up in a Guernésiais-speaking environment. Adults who were evacuated or served in the forces were also exposed to English almost exclusively. Anglicisation was already well advanced before the Second World War, but this unprecedented population movement had repercussions for islanders’ ability to speak Guernésiais and their attitude towards it. This arguably also resulted in the loss of significant parts of the language. The colloquial terms that parents might have used with infants and young children at their knee were not used during this time and therefore ceased to become part of the cultural heritage which passed through the generations.
- 2.9 Anglicisation was further strengthened by the growth of tourism after the war, by the dominance of English in the media and by the adoption of an education system strongly modelled on the UK’s Butler Act of 1944. Marriage between islanders and those born elsewhere also accelerated the decline of Guernésiais within the family.
- 2.10 In the April 2001 census 1,327 people reported being able to speak Guernésiais fluently and 1,871 reported being able to understand Guernésiais fully. Of the fluent speakers, 70.4% (934) were over the age of 64. Only 31 people under the age of 20 were reported as being able to speak Guernésiais fluently. This is the last formal data available on the survival of the language but the current estimate of native speakers in 2020 is that there are between only 50 and 200. Many of these are aged over 80 with very few proficient speakers under the age of 60.
- 2.11 The language is defined by UNESCO as ‘severely endangered’. The next few years

are critical for Guernésiais. The decisions the States make now about whether or not to provide resources to support it will determine whether it will live or die. Put simply, the fate of a language that has been spoken on our island for some two thousand years is to be decided 'on our watch'.

- 2.12 Since the decline of the language became recognised in the 1950s a number of initiatives have been launched in order to keep Guernésiais alive. These have included the employment of a Language Support Officer, night school classes, extra-curricular classes in schools, academic research, conversation groups, media pieces, books, cultural collaborations with Normandy and the Guernsey French Eisteddfod. Despite the enthusiasm and hard work which goes into such initiatives, they are not sufficient to ensure the long-term survival of Guernésiais. The effective transmission to new speakers has been limited and few new learners have progressed beyond beginner status.
- 2.13 It should be recognised that Guernésiais is just one of a family of indigenous minority languages within the British Isles. Others include Welsh, Manx, Jèrriais, Cornish, Irish Gaelic and Ulster Scots. Government agencies and third sector organisations across this spectrum report similar problems in maintaining their regional languages and have adopted models and solutions which could be applied in Guernsey. There is extensive research, many case studies and accepted best practice in language revitalisation from across the world that Guernsey can draw upon.

3 The Case for a Guernsey Language Commission

- 3.1 It is recognised that halting and reversing the decline of a language requires a structured approach using proven methods with well-defined objectives and measurable outcomes. It must employ best practice with regard to language teaching, sustaining and revitalising the language. Experience in other jurisdictions indicates that while support, guidance and direction can be effectively provided at Government level, a wider community commitment is also required.
- 3.2 Historically, the former Culture and Leisure Department worked closely with various organisations that seek to increase the recognition and use of our language. Despite enthusiasm, expertise and public interest, it has to be acknowledged that there is currently no recognisable vehicle or strategy for the sustainable protection and development of the language. In 2012, a 'shadow' Guernsey Language Commission was formed to test the viability of setting up a coordination / promotional body in support of the language. Albeit on an informal footing, this Commission model proved successful to some extent in the short-term, particularly in providing some focus for the many language initiatives that were taking place on the island. Lack of financial resources to provide a sustainable footing and lack of government support are cited as the two key

reasons for the shadow Commission not remaining successful after its first few years.

- 3.3 It will be a considerable challenge first to halt and then reverse the decline in the use of Guernésiais, but the rewards to be gained in terms of the preservation of the island's unique identity and wider benefits are such that the process must be accelerated without delay. The Committee *for* Education, Sport & Culture does not have the resources or expertise to develop an effective language strategy. Based on the learnings from the shadow Commission, and with the experience of successfully working through other joint voluntary sector / public sector initiatives and organisations, the Committee intends to establish a new Guernsey Language Commission.

4 Terms of Reference for a Guernsey Language Commission

- 4.1 The mandate for the Guernsey Language Commission ('The Commission') will be:

To sustain, develop and promote Guernésiais as a unique aspect of the island's culture, heritage and identity.

- 4.2 The Commission will provide the structure to study, promote and develop Guernésiais and allow the full potential of community involvement and public/private partnerships to be realised. It will adopt a structured approach using proven methods with well-defined objectives and measurable outcomes. These are aspirations that cannot easily be met by the States acting alone or by the various individuals and groups currently involved in the study, teaching and promotion of Guernésiais.
- 4.3 As an umbrella body the Commission will help to promote the work of existing institutions and groups with an interest in protecting the language. It will engage with the many existing groups and individuals researching, teaching and promoting the language. It will strive by these means to reduce duplication or friction between competing initiatives and to increase their effectiveness.
- 4.4 The Commission's first task will be to work with the Committee to develop a business plan with short, medium and long-term goals built upon a progressive series of strategic projects each with measurable objectives.
- 4.5 It will be expected to focus initially on four core objectives which can be summarised as:
- A. Raise awareness of Guernésiais and encourage participation, giving it a relevance to the present-day population and economy of the island.
 - B. Facilitate the effective teaching of Guernésiais.
 - C. Research, record and archive Guernésiais, ensuring that this vital piece

of our heritage is not lost.

D. Raise funding to enable the Commission to deliver its mandate.

4.6 The new Guernsey Language Commission will be expected to publish, and consult on, its detailed Business Plan. While the Committee does not want to be prescriptive regarding the activities of the new Commission, examples of what the community might expect and how these objectives could be achieved in practice are given below.

A. Raise Awareness of Guernésiais and Encourage Participation

- Raise awareness of the benefits of using the language to nurture wellbeing, fostering a sense of belonging linked to the island’s unique identity.
- Promote understanding of the relevance of the language locally, for example through the meanings of surnames and place names.
- Champion the economic benefits of using Guernésiais.
- Promote the proven intellectual and health benefits of second language acquisition.
- Work towards recognition of Guernésiais as an official language of Guernsey.
- Support and encourage existing language groups.
- Encourage participation by existing language speakers.
- Develop online delivery platforms utilising emerging technologies, apps, social media and e-learning suites.
- Generate regular news and information media releases. Create listings and a diary of local language events in partnership with groups and individuals involved with the language.
- Encourage the traditional media to feature Guernésiais as part of their regular programming/format.
- Co-ordinate a ‘road show’ of volunteers to promote the language at local events.
- Create and support events to promote the language.
- Promote a translation service.
- Encourage the States and the private sector to use Guernésiais on signage, printed material, packaging, vehicles, websites etc.

B. Facilitate the Effective Teaching of Guernésiais

- Create new multimedia, modular, adult education courses for Guernésiais. Adult education is recognised as the best path to build a pool of speakers, to provide the next generation of teachers and to give support to young people who are learning.
- Support existing adult teaching initiatives.
- Support and improve existing extracurricular teaching of Guernésiais in primary schools.
- Encourage and support the teaching and learning of Guernésiais as an

enrichment activity in secondary schools.

- Create learning resources such as Guernésiais ‘phrase books’, an online dictionary and apps.
- Support those who were once proficient speakers in recovering their language skills.
- Encourage the mixing of speakers and learners.

C. Research, Record and Archive Guernésiais

- Provide support to encourage groups and individuals to conduct linguistic research of Guernésiais including usage, vocabulary and grammar.
- Develop or support projects to record native speakers with effective, secure archive provision and with easy access for the public to make use of recordings and transcripts.
- Encourage academics and the general public to provide new and existing Guernésiais research, recordings, transcripts and other material to a central archive in Guernsey and make it freely available for others to access.
- Develop partnerships with Universities to encourage and support academic research on Guernésiais.
- Support and encourage the dissemination of research via publications, lectures and online forums.
- Embrace and research the differing views on Guernésiais spelling, pronunciation and grammar.
- Support the development of an electronic language corpus/database that will assist initiatives to create dictionaries, teaching packages, online resources for learners and promotional material.

D. Raise Funding to Enable the Commission to Deliver its Mandate.

- Secure sponsorship and/or support in kind for general administration services and for specific projects.
- Facilitate varied options to secure sponsorship from individuals, including membership/Patron type schemes and bequests/legacies.
- Support the States’ participation in the British Irish Council’s Indigenous Minority Languages work stream.
- Promote the sale of merchandise and publications.
- Consider the fee structure and/or royalties from education courses as a potential income stream.

4.7 The Commission will bring in acknowledged language specialists to inform its work, some of whom have already supported the Committee, and in turn provide assistance to specialists conducting research into the language. It will strive to extend links to other organisations working with minority and endangered languages in Europe, including the British Irish Council’s Indigenous Minority Language Forum, UNESCO and the European Union.

4.8 The Commission will be set up for an initial period of 3 years, at which point its continuation will be subject to review and approval by the Committee on behalf of the States. The Committee believes that the success or otherwise of the Commission will be heavily reliant on the level of support it is able to obtain from the public. Should that support prove to be less than the Committee currently believes exists, it is right that a full review then takes place. There should be no expectation that the States are committing to the Commission's long-term funding at this point. If the Commission model is not successful in delivering the four core objectives listed earlier, the Committee would then reconsider the options for the preservation and promotion of Guernésiais. If, having been provided with every opportunity to embrace the protection and promotion of the language, the community has decided not to do so then the States will need to face up to the reality that there is insufficient appetite in Guernsey to continue investing in the indigenous language.

5 Funding the Guernsey Language Commission

5.1 The Committee currently has a revenue budget of £26,000 for the development of the language and it intends to continue to invest these funds in language initiatives working with the new Guernsey Language Commission.

5.2 The Committee is also proposing that the Commission be funded by a combination of sponsorship, commercial activities and a contribution in the form of a grant fund from the States of £300,000, comprising grants of up to £100,000 for each of 2021, 2022 and 2023.

5.3 Based on similar job descriptions and gradings, the Committee believes that initial staffing costs of between £49,000 and £63,000 per annum are likely. This is based on the full costs of employing one full time equivalent executive grade 'development officer'. Experience in other fields suggests that a circa. £40,000 per annum administration budget, supplemented by private sector support, would enable the Commission to make a very good start on a number of the potential projects listed in paragraph 4.6, including £17,000 predicted marketing and event costs focussed on promotion and participation in the first year of operation. It is difficult to quantify the funding requirement, however the Committee believes that this level of seed-funding will provide the Commission with a sound basis on which to plan and grow and attract private sector funding in the form of sponsorship and support in-kind.

5.4 The governance and legal framework for the Guernsey Language Commission will be based on the latest guidance and best practice with respect to 'Arm's Length Bodies'. While it is appreciated that the Commission will have responsibility in respect of making financial commitments, in view of the States contributing towards these costs, the Committee will work with the Law Officers

to ensure that there is an appropriate level of governance and Service Level Agreement in place associated with the grant funding.

- 5.5 The establishment of a new Guernsey Language Commission does not of itself require the consent of the States; however, the Committee is keen to provide this Assembly with the opportunity to debate the future of our language and to demonstrate commitment to its survival. Agreeing to this grant funding, and thereby providing the Guernsey Language Commission with a genuine chance of success, provides this Assembly with a real and practical opportunity to demonstrate that commitment.
- 5.6 Should the States reject the Propositions attached to this policy letter, the Committee will take that as a definitive judgement that the States do not wish to invest further time and money maintaining or promoting the language.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 This policy letter asks the States to provide financial support to the Guernsey Language Commission by providing a States grant of £300,000, payable over three years, acknowledging that the next few years are critical for Guernésiais. It will be a considerable challenge first to halt and then reverse the decline in the use of Guernésiais, but the rewards to be gained in terms of the preservation of the island's unique identity and wider benefits are such that the process must begin in earnest without delay.
- 6.2 In closing, the Committee would like to note its appreciation for the input from many contributors who have provided useful language development expertise to this and previous Committees, not just in the preparation of these proposals, but over a period of many years.
- 6.3 The Committee recommends that the States approve the Propositions to which this policy letter is attached.

7 Compliance with Rule 4

- 7.1 Rule 4 of the Rules of Procedure of the States of Deliberation and their Committees sets out the information which must be included in, or appended to, motions laid before the States.
- 7.2 In accordance with Rule 4(1), the Propositions have been submitted to Her Majesty's Procureur for advice on any legal or constitutional implications. She has advised that there is no reason in law why the Propositions should not be put into effect.
- 7.3 In accordance with Rule 4(3), the Committee has included Propositions which ask

the States to provide financial support to the Guernsey Language Commission in the form of a grant fund from the States of £300,000, comprising grants of £100,000 for each of 2021, 2022 and 2023.

- 7.4 In accordance with Rule 4(4) of the Rules of Procedure of the States of Deliberation and their Committees, it is confirmed that the propositions above have the unanimous support of the Committee.
- 7.5 In accordance with Rule 4(5), links with the Recovery Strategy are outlined earlier in this policy letter and the Propositions relate to the purpose and policy responsibilities of the Committee 'To encourage human development by maximising opportunities for participation and excellence through education, learning, sport and culture at every stage of life'.

Yours faithfully

M. J. Fallaize
President

R. H. Graham
Vice-President

M. H. Dorey
P. J. Roffey
R. H. Tooley

R. Conder
Non-States Member