

**Education, population, poverty, tax...getting views on topics like those in Jersey isn't the difficult part – but have you ever noticed how many people sound eminently credible when talking about them, even though they may actually be basing their views on conjecture, false facts and blind guesswork?**

There is a real danger in making the 'facts' fit the opinion, rather than the other way around – which is exactly the point at which someone with an eye on the latest buzzwords will smugly insert the phrase 'post-truth' into the conversation, imagining its actually helpful.

So, we've asked the Jersey Policy Forum to add some robust material to those crucial local debates – the point is not to provoke agreement or acquiescence; it is to provide reliable material on which others can build their views.



Gailina Liew, Director, Jersey Policy Forum



## What is Jersey and what does it want to be?

**How would you describe Jersey to someone who has never been here? What is your vision for Jersey? These were among the questions that attendees of the Jersey Policy Forum's inaugural conference on March 15, 2018 were asked to explore.**

The conference featured UK policy expert, think-tanker and author, David Goodhart, as the keynote speaker with an opening address by Jersey's Chief Minister, Senator Ian Gorst. Attendees also heard from the new Chief Executive of the States of Jersey, Charlie Parker, and Jersey's first Children's Commissioner, Deborah McMillan who shared their observations and impressions from their first few months in post, and as newcomers to Jersey. Over 140 attendees including more than 30 students and young people from a diverse range of schools, occupations, businesses and communities were then asked to explore a number of questions about Jersey's future in sixteen facilitated roundtable sessions.

The young people also shared their views individually during the afternoon. The whole conference agenda is available at [www.jerseypolicyforum.org](http://www.jerseypolicyforum.org) where the complete conference report will be published in due course.

How would you describe Jersey to someone who has never been here? The roundtable discussions generated some already commonly acknowledged attributes that referred to Jersey's ability to punch above its weight, its rich history, culture, natural beauty, and identifiable icons such as the potato and the Jersey cow. Attendees also described Jersey as:

- small, insular, odd, deceptively complex.
- Island bubble with micro-economy.
- A mix of contradictions:
- perception of an affluent society and incredible quality of life from the outside but an 'imperfect paradise' as this is clearly not the case for the bottom quarter of households who are struggling or just managing;

- beautiful, safe, clean environment but with questionable success in integrating essential immigrant workers into society, evidence of certain groups like children continuing to be at risk, and many young people felt that the island is 'boring' and 'claustrophobic' with few options for leisure, entertainment and opportunities to meet people from diverse places and experiences;
  - small community but divisive;
  - low unemployment, but lack of meaningful employment opportunities outside of finance;
  - a British crown dependency but physically situated closer to France with enduring historical influences on language and culture;
  - fascinating heritage and history, but struggles with change and innovation;
  - respected and successful international finance centre but "NOT A TAX HAVEN", this last point also revealing a sense of frustration and shame at having to explain and defend Jersey from this widely held external perception.
- What is your vision for Jersey? Conference attendees were asked to describe, in one phrase, their visions for Jersey. The roundtable discussions generated a diverse range of output that included:

- the first island that regenerates by design through diversity and resilience;
- zero waste, zero inequality;
- be 'gravity defying', focus on caring for each other, inclusiveness, restoring trust and ensuring that everyone feels valued;
- best place to live, work and play for everyone;
- reach out beyond UK to European universities for higher education options;
- develop more options for 'home-grown' careers in nursing, social work, teaching, encouraging broader variety of businesses to settle in Jersey;
- healthier / wealthier / fairer / greener / wiser / safer – for everyone;
- big enough to have richness of opportunity for all and small enough to be open minded and caring;
- fittest small island;
- inclusive island of opportunity;
- friendliest place in the world;
- create a thriving and happy island for our children to inherit through community-led, collaborative and innovative ways;
- a place that our children will choose for their long-term future;
- a place that everyone can be proud of;
- force for good;

How does this output sit with you? Does it make sense to you? How would you address the questions that were posed? What do you think? Conference attendees were also asked to work on two further questions to prioritize the top 5 things that need to change for Jersey's long-term future and the top 5 things that should be measured and included in a 'Jersey Dashboard.' To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln,

The best way to predict the future is to create it. Jersey's future will be shaped and created by the intentions and actions of its many communities and by government, responding to external challenges such as Brexit and technology disruption, but also through pro-active thought, planning and boldness of vision. Our conference experience highlighted the importance of hearing from a diversity of people and particularly from the young people of Jersey who are keen to participate and are searching for opportunities to access meaningful information and engage. Some attendees were surprised to learn that people become eligible to vote in Jersey at 16 years of age so the chance for young people to influence and have a say in elections is already available!

Jersey's next general election is just around the corner on May 16th and presents a timely opportunity for everyone to engage and, if you are lucky enough to be eligible, to vote. A general election allows those eligible to vote to elect people to make decisions, take action on issues and set the course for the future of Jersey. It is an important time to participate in a democracy and taking some time to understand how to exercise your right to vote makes sense. A new website, [www.theyworkforyou.je](http://www.theyworkforyou.je), has been launched to help make information about your elected members more easily accessible. There are 36 positions open for election. Information about the candidates standing for these positions is available on [www.vote.je](http://www.vote.je). We encourage you to explore the questions posed at our conference, share your thoughts, look at the information available on the websites, engage with candidates and exercise your right to vote.

**We are also interested in hearing your views about our work and invite you to share them by email to [contact@jerseypolicyforum.org](mailto:contact@jerseypolicyforum.org)**