

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



THINK-TANK

“(W)anchor!” – a salute to civic engagement?

Guest writer – Christian Julé

What holds a community together?

Engaging with one's community through volunteering, joining the public service, taking on honorary roles and the like is a hallmark feature of successful communities, and creates better resilience to weather challenging times. One enduring example of civic engagement and collaboration in Jersey is the parish policing framework, first established by the French kings in 1462, it remains in place today....that's 557 years!

This system of policing in Jersey is pretty unusual in the UK. In effect, the Island has thirteen independent but connected police forces (an Honorary Police force for each of the 12 parishes and the States Police) co-existing within an area of forty-five square miles; each one having a separate chain of command, all under the supervision of the Attorney General. I was also surprised to learn that only the Honorary Police have the power to charge, and bail charges.

I became even more intrigued when I learned that my friend, Christian Julé, a

Director of an IT company, sailor, avid cellist and family man had decided to volunteer as a Centenier for St. Saviour. He was sworn in at the Royal Court on September 14, 2018 and, so far, has completed 66 hours of training and spent 46 hours on patrols, dealing with parish hall enquiries and attending court and various meetings. That's a pretty hefty time commitment and there's more to come. Why did he do it, and what has he learned so far?

Over to Christian...

I suppose in some way it's a bit like joining the scouts, lots of tests and badges (think training attendance signatures) for each element, the training is intense and actually amazing. The States Police provide most of the Honorary training with the Attorney General and Criminal Justice Unit delivering the Centenier's legal and court procedures.

The policing courses cover issues such as police powers, safety, alcohol and drugs,

road traffic collisions, drunk in charge of a vehicle, public order offences, radio procedures, the list goes on. The first full-day course focussed on safety: in essence keeping the public safe, keeping your offender safe and compliant and, importantly, keeping yourself safe. You will be no help if it's you that's being kicked to the floor.

We started with two shocking videos, real bodycam/CCTV videos; this was not the BBC's drama Bodyguard, but real reality and it was not nice. One of them showed what the effects of Ketamine had on a teenager, and, as a father, it scared the hell out of me - it most probably ruined the young person's life too.

The floor mat activity did lighten things up, getting aggressive offenders onto the floor and handcuffed, probably a useful skill when dealing with a very drunk and angry individual. I should add, the handcuffs we are issued are not in any way comfortable. They are rigid, and if you wriggle or move much, they hurt!

With over 60 hours of police training completed, I am now looking forward to the court and legal training. I've also had a police driving assessment (I enjoyed

that), police blue light training (we have 2 shiny police cars in St Saviour!) and additional training in drugs awareness, communication, etc. and I now know that the Parish Police is an organisation of 12 well-trained teams, meeting the highest standards expected by the public - and are 'honorary' (meaning voluntary) to boot!

Of course, this was very different 20 years ago, when you could sign up, get a warrant card the same day, and stop offenders in your jeans - well, in theory, off-duty, you still can. This brings us onto uniforms: we are kitted out pretty much the same as the States of Jersey Police, with ties, lapel identifiers, jackets, tactical vests, handcuffs, radios, pocket books, breathalysers, the list goes on. All very useful when you are out on patrol, and with the increase in knife crime, and drug issues, there are even plans to issue a number of stab vests.

Now let's change the tone a little; this, from an experienced Centenier: “(W) anchor! I'll probably be called that seven or eight times over the year, some of them at the Battle of Flowers or perhaps the Weekender event, when motorists take umbrage at the inconvenience of reduced

traffic flow, or for some, it's an opportunity to have a go.”

He assures me the insult is not personal, but aimed at the uniform and authority. I thought about this, you give up your personal time to give something back to the community and most likely you will be called all sorts of things. However, always looking for the positive, I find this nautical term of endearment a very useful measure.

You see, with about 2,500 (give or take, I'm using 14 year old stats)* Parish Hall enquiries per annum, 400 - 500 of them juveniles, every time an honorary policeman is called “(W)anchor!”, about 35 young people have been dealt with at Parish level and kept out of Court; that's 250 a year.

250 youngsters, who have pushed the boundaries, received a Parish sanction by the Centenier, and more importantly won't have a conviction noted in future police checks. In reality, that means they may get the job they desire, or the visas required for a gap year adventure; and even better, 90% of them won't re-offend.

Throughout the training, I have been most impressed with everyone I have met in the

States and Honorary police forces. They have been the nicest, most professional bunch of people you would want at your dinner table. My fellow volunteers include teachers, nurses, retired police, trust managers, park managers, doctors, decorators, lawyers, care assistants, finance directors, farming experts, the list, again, is endless. Add to this the gender and nationality mix, we must be the most diverse organisation in the island. And, of course, with this blend come the most incredible skill sets and experience. All of us trained by our professional colleagues and caring enough to support their parishes. Pretty amazing!

These are my opinions and observations: a middle-aged (OK, leaning towards older) bearded rookie Centenier with a pair of handcuffs. But remember, for all the nautical name calling, 250 juveniles in our island each year can apply for their desired jobs or get the visas they want, and that's why I chose to become a Centenier.

My thanks to Christian for sharing his thoughts on his journey so far. Please visit our website, www.jerseypolicyforum.org, for further updates as Christian continues his journey.

*I would like to acknowledge and thank Helen Miles and Peter Raynor who drafted "The conduct and effectiveness of Parish Hall Enquiries" in 2005 and co-wrote "Reintegrative Justice in Practice (Welfare and Society)" 2014.