

STATES OF JERSEY



DRAFT ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2011 (P.99/2010): ELEVENTH AMENDMENT

**Lodged au Greffe on 31st August 2010
by Deputy S. Pitman of St. Helier**

STATES GREFFE

DRAFT ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2011 (P.99/2010): ELEVENTH
AMENDMENT

PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (a) –

After the words “withdrawn from the consolidated fund in 2011” insert the words –

“except that the net revenue expenditure of the Home Affairs Department shall be increased by £4,000 to enable the States of Jersey Police to run an annual campaign aimed at reducing the number of drivers using mobile phones, and the net revenue expenditure of the Treasury and Resources Department shall be decreased by the same amount by reducing the allocation for Restructuring Costs.”.

DEPUTY S. PITMAN OF ST. HELIER

REPORT

It is with some sadness that I bring this proposition to the States, as it means that the founder of the 'Hands-off' campaign, Mr. Paul Newman, has been unsuccessful in his efforts to secure funding to run it on an annual basis, and that still drivers continue to put themselves and others at risk by using their mobiles phones whilst driving.

Success of the Hands-off Campaign

Despite this, since its launch in October 2006, the campaign has received much support from the public and some well-established and highly-respected voluntary organisations such as: Headway, the Jersey Early Years Association and the JCCT. It has attracted many local firms to lend their support to promote the campaign's message of safety, these include: Robert's Garage, Rossboroughs' Insurance, the JEC, and Jersey Telecom. Further still, a number of local media companies have also helped Mr. Newman publicize the campaign – I am sure that many Members will have seen stickers in vehicles and articles in the JEP; and others have assisted him financially for the cost of purchasing materials.

In 2009, Mr. Newman approached me to assist him in a political capacity. In doing so, and having worked with him in costing the campaign, I have submitted a number of requests to States Departments and bodies. Unfortunately, this has proved fruitless, and subsequently, is the reason why I am bringing this amendment to the Annual Business Plan 2011.

It is my firmly-held belief that the Hands-off campaign has made the Jersey public much more aware of the dangers of driving whilst using a mobile phone, and is something that needs to continue if we are to reduce the number of people still doing it and ultimately, reduce the harm that these drivers can cause. More importantly, it is also the opinion of the States Road Safety Officer and strong advocate of the campaign, Philip Blake (*article published in the JEP – 10th October 2006*). However, the Road Safety Officer also states within the article that –

'Despite the fact that it is an offence punishable by a £500 fine, many motorists are still ignoring the law and are putting themselves and other road users at risk'.

And this view is backed by the figures published by the States of Jersey Police in 2006 revealing that: nearly 300 prosecutions for drivers using mobile phones took place by September of that year.

Why should the States now fund the campaign?

Mr. Newman has tirelessly campaigned to make people more aware of the dangers of driving whilst using a mobile phone and to prevent casualties of this. Some might say that he has done this to satisfy his own need – to counter, to some extent, the loss of his sister, and in doing so, has laboured the point and has taken the issue far too seriously. To any such doubters I would ask that they consider the following.

In the JEP article of 10th October 2006 the Road Safety Officer is quoted as saying –

'...many different studies using different research techniques have been completed and have reached the same conclusions, that using a mobile phone while driving adversely affects driver performance in a number of ways. It will affect a driver's ability to maintain lane position, an appropriate and

predictable speed and an appropriate gap between vehicles, and reaction times are adversely affected, as well as general judgement and awareness. It can be as dangerous as someone driving over the drink-drive limit'.

It is not just my opinion, but the firm belief of the States of Jersey Road Safety Officer, that this issue must be taken as seriously as drink-driving. Subsequently, I see no reason (as the UK Government does) as to why the States should not take the responsibility of being at the helm of an annual campaign to discourage drivers using their mobile phones, to that which is on a par with the 'drink-drive' campaign run by the Police. Even more so, I would suggest to Members, as such a campaign would cost the States only a mere £4,000 a year (an estimated figure give by the Road Safety Officer). Comparatively cheap, I hope fellow Members would agree, even if only one serious injury or fatality is prevented as a result.

Since the recognition that 'drink-driving' is a highly dangerous activity and the cause of high numbers of serious road accidents, the States of Jersey has long made it a crime punishable by law; we have also introduced education in schools and the Police now run annual campaigns; and we often see them running breathalyzer checks on the roads.

It is a fact that there are now considerably less motor accidents caused by drink-drivers than there were before these Government initiatives were put into place. Indeed, it is a fine example, is it not, of how Government can greatly reduce an activity that can put people's lives at risk, by introducing the relevant laws and simultaneously, the education. I believe that one without the other would not have had such an impact.

Many times in the past, this Assembly has shown itself to be alert to the need to be pro-active in responding to newly-arising dangers. This is another opportunity for the States to respond quickly and decisively, in tackling this dangerous behaviour.

Financial and manpower implications

This amendment is cost-neutral for the States for 2011 as the small increase in budget of the Home Affairs Department is offset by the reduction in the £6 million central allocation for Treasury and Resources for Restructuring Costs. There are no additional manpower implications.