

STATES OF JERSEY



PROPOSED COMMON STRATEGIC POLICY 2018–22 (P.110/2018): NINTH AMENDMENT

Lodged au Greffe on 20th November 2018
by the Connétable of St. Helier

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSED COMMON STRATEGIC POLICY 2018–22 (P.110/2018):
NINTH AMENDMENT

PAGE 2 –

After the words “Appendix to this Proposition” insert the words “, except that on page 9 of the Appendix to the Proposed Common Strategic Policy 2018–22 (“**5 Strategic priorities**”), in the section headed “**What we will achieve**”, at the end of the list of bullet-points, to insert a new bullet-point worded as follows: “Work with the UK Government and the Public of Jersey to find a way for Jersey to accept an appropriate number of child refugees”.”.

CONNÉTABLE OF ST. HELIER

Note: After this amendment, the proposition would read as follows –

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

in accordance with Article 18(2)(e) of the States of Jersey Law 2005, to approve the statement of the Common Strategic Policy of the Council of Ministers as set out in the Appendix to this Proposition, except that on page 9 of the Appendix to the Proposed Common Strategic Policy 2018–22 (“**5 Strategic priorities**”), in the section headed “**What we will achieve**”, at the end of the list of bullet-points, to insert a new bullet-point worded as follows: “Work with the UK Government and the Public of Jersey to find a way for Jersey to accept an appropriate number of child refugees”.

REPORT

Following an oral question to the Chief Minister on 20th November, which was timed out, I understand that the Chief Minister's Department is in negotiation with the UK Government on the matter of child refugees, and that this amendment may, therefore, be superfluous. However, I have not seen any detail of the work being undertaken, and hope that at the very least this amendment to the Proposed Common Strategic Policy 2018–22 may provide a clear way forward for the States, and for those members of the Public who have expressed a wish to be allowed to offer refuge to a small number of the children who are suffering today in various war zones.

When I raised this matter in the States some time ago, I was given to understand that, much as the then Chief Minister, Senator I.J. Gorst, and his counterpart in Guernsey, wished to help, it was too difficult a matter to resolve due to international agreements and protocols. (Statement made on 'Migrant situation in Europe' (8th September 2015).) I have decided to ask the question again following a speech made by Lord Alf Dubs, in which he suggested that the Crown Dependencies could play a part in relieving the refugee crisis in Europe. When I met Lord Dubs during a recent meeting of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly, he encouraged me to take the matter up, hence my recent question to the Chief Minister.

As people will know, this matter was debated in the States Chamber on 21 March 2017, with the following proposition: 'The Assembly is asked whether it is of opinion that Jersey must accommodate and settle at least 400 Syrian refugees,' and the motion was carried by 27 to 13 votes with 5 abstentions. I am referring, of course, to a debate moved in Jersey's Youth Assembly by students from the Jersey College for Girls, which I attach as an Appendix.

Many of the 14 actions to be achieved on page 14 of the Draft Common Strategic Policy are concerned with developing our international reputation, including –

- Be outward-facing and promote Jersey on the international stage
- Engage internationally and strengthen our reputation
- Continue to develop positive relations with the UK Government, Parliamentarians and other UK stakeholders
- Build on our existing engagement programme with EU institutions and nations, including our nearest neighbour, France
- Develop and negotiate a suite of international agreements to underpin opportunities in new international markets, as well as to maintain existing business flows.

On the rare occasions when this matter has been discussed, it has been pointed out that Jersey has supported the plight of refugees and others suffering abroad in various war zones, and in countries affected by drought and famine. This is entirely true and is to be commended, as is the work of those who volunteer to spend time overseas assisting communities in the building of schools, medical facilities, and so on. However, our overseas aid, and the many other generous activities carried out for the benefit of the least well-off abroad, does not, in my view, absolve us from considering whether we should follow the example set by other prosperous communities of offering homes to an appropriate number of child refugees.

What that number is I am not sure, although the students who debated the matter 2 years ago covered this question very ably, as they did other objections that were raised.

Financial and manpower implications

There are no additional financial or manpower implications for the States arising from this amendment.

“5. That Jersey must accommodate and settle at least 400 Syrian refugees

The Connétable of St. Clement (in the Chair):

The next item of public business is in the name of the Jersey College for Girls, and I ask the Greffier to read the proposition.

The Greffier of the States:

The Assembly is asked whether it is of opinion that Jersey must accommodate and settle at least 400 Syrian refugees.

5.1 Miss Box:

By upholding justice and the rule of law, and by striding for societies that are fair and offer opportunities for all, we overcome division and find reconciliation so that the benefits of progress and prosperity may be multiplied and shared. This was a part of the message of hope and unity shared by the Queen to all of the Commonwealth countries 7 days ago. The endemic indifference shown to families forced to leave their home and their loved ones has been heart-breaking. Hence we will not remain bystanders and would hope to be seen as ambassadors of our Majesty’s message and representative of the universal desire for global unity and peace. For many reasons such as this, we believe that Jersey should accommodate and settle 400 refugees across a 5-year period. In response to the refugee crisis, Oxfam conducted an investigation into exactly how many people each country should be looking to take, what has come to be known as a fair share. The U.K. has taken a mere 8 per cent of their fair share while Canada has gone above and beyond with an intake of 209 per cent. Taking into account factors such as our wealth and size, our fair share is 40 people or approximately 8 families. Forty people is not a huge ask by any stretch of the imagination, and I bet you can guess how much of our fair share we have taken: zero per cent, not a single person. Although there were indeed talks of taking in 3 refugee families by the States, these quickly fell by the wayside. With places such as Canada, although obviously considerably larger than us in size, taking in well over their fair share, there is in fact no reason why we should not only follow in these footsteps but instead create our own paving for building a stronger and brighter future for the 400 lives we will be impacting. There are 60 million refugees in the world seeking shelter from the harsh reality they have endured for so long. If the tables are turned and our own Island, ourselves, our family and our friends were in the unfortunate position of needing somewhere safe to be, I would hope that another country would be willing to help the 100,000 of us as we should help the refugees. I would hope that people would not look at us when we are at our most vulnerable and label us as the refugees are so often unfairly labelled with stigmas attached to them. What stereotypes spring to mind when you think of a refugee? Someone uneducated, someone who cannot be trusted, someone who will take advantage of what we are so generously offering them? Refugees should not be viewed through this tarnished and unjustly tainted perspective. For instance, are you aware that many refugees and migrants start their own businesses and create jobs? Indeed, one in 7 U.K. companies were set up by migrants. Successful refugee businessmen in Britain include the co-founder of Marks & Spencer, Michael Marks. We need only cast our eyes no further than across the Atlantic to see the hypocrisy and shameful treatment of outsiders. We do not want to be people who follow blindly in the shadow of ignorance and heartlessness. Instead, we should stand with open arms to welcome the people into our Island and be proud for taking such a measure. Finally, it is of the utmost importance that we recognise the strength of

connection we share with these refugees who we seem to have so desperately attempted to make distant. In one way or another, we are all refugees. In fact, I would like to invite everyone in the States to please stand up. Now, please remain standing if you were born in Jersey. Remain standing yet again if both your parents were born in Jersey. Thank you. The rest of you, and although notably very few, may now be seated. This proves that we cannot even trace back more than a few generations of our own families without there being signs of immigration. We are all immigrants. Why should we not be the first generation to allow Syrian refugees into our country, given that they were in the same position that our own families were once in? It is essential to remember that we are all vulnerable to disaster. At any given moment, our lives could potentially turn upside down and leave us desperately in need of help. I think it is easy to believe, from a position of safety, that if we lost such security somebody would help us, but it is wrong to expect from others what we ourselves are failing to provide. It would take only a loss of a job or a home to realise that we are not so far away from those asking for our help. Indeed, we share a great deal in common with refugees. Who among us would not flee if faced with war and persecution? Who among us would not try to start a new life in a safe country which provides the opportunity to flourish? Our common humanity both obliges us to make room for refugees and gives us means with which to understand them. These people are sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, doctors, dancers, humans. In fact, the only difference between us and them is that we were born here and they were born there. Thank you. **[Approbation]**

The Connétable of St. Clement (in the Chair):

Is the proposition seconded? **[Seconded]** Thank you. The proposition is proposed and seconded. Does anyone wish to speak? Mr. Morby.

5.1.1 Mr. Morby:

I would like to argue not so much from an ethical standpoint as a practical and a logistical standpoint. The average Syrian earns just over a-twelfth of the average Jersey resident, and being refugees it is likely they would be almost incapable of providing for themselves adequate accommodation and nourishment. According to the States of Jersey, in 2016, the average 2-bedroom flat cost £349,000. If we were to house 400 individuals, 2 per bedroom, this would cost £31,160,000, by no means a small cost to bear. Furthermore, if we were to feed our refugee guests nothing but potatoes, for a day, to meet their calorie needs, we would have to spend £679, and eating only potatoes they would surely die. **[Laughter]** I really have no idea what the true cost would be, but whatever it would be, it would not be small. **[Approbation]**

5.1.2 Mr. Flynn:

Just following on from Mr. Morby's point, I would like to say, on behalf of everyone at Victoria College, our hearts go out to the refugees as much as anyone else. Perhaps that is not ultimately clear from what Mr. Morby said, but we do care. But ultimately we would like to argue that Jersey is not the best place for refugees to settle. First of all, the cost of living in Jersey is higher than in the U.K. and indeed in most of Europe, which would obviously provide a lot of issues for refugees. Secondly, housing is another issue in Jersey, and ultimately it will be extremely difficult for refugees, if they came to the Island, to get on the housing ladder, and that is an issue. **[Laughter]** Probably most importantly, though, is integration within the Jersey community. Jersey has, I believe, one mosque. Now, apart from that, schooling ... the obvious language barrier would be a huge, huge problem for any Syrian refugee children who would undoubtedly miss out on education. Therefore it would perhaps be better that these refugees instead be settled

somewhere else, perhaps with an already existing migrant community rather than settle in Jersey where ultimately they may suffer more than if they were settled somewhere else in Europe. [Approbation]

5.1.3 Mr. De La Cour:

I think it is important to note, following on from my other team member's responses, as the Chief Minister said, there are very good reasons why not even 40 refugees have been accepted into the Island due to the housing burden that that would bring and which would further increase the housing burden on residents already living here, as prices would further rise as demand went up. So for J.C.G. to bring up that there should be 400 refugees, 10 times the original amount debated by the States, seems a little bit of an extreme case.

5.1.4 Miss Green:

In your report, you kept fluctuating between 400 refugees stated in your paper report and 40 which was said by Miss Box. Could you clarify as to what is your actual number, and if a group of you, which is smaller than the States Chamber, cannot decide how many refugees should come, do you really think it is going to be an easy task getting 400 refugees in the Island when there are even more people to make a decision? Along with that, the Island residential status thing would exclude a lot of Syrian refugees coming for jobs in this Island. If you are going to say that the only way to do that would be to bypass that for Syrian refugees, then a lot of migrants to the country could consider that an unfair implication and a benefit. Also, you might have people use the Island as a gateway to the U.K., to get in there where they can finally earn lower wages, and that might create a Calais-style camp in St. Malo and we might see the Island being used as some sort of secondary stop into the U.K. citizenship.

5.1.5 Miss Radcliffe:

To follow Mr. Flynn's point, while I do understand the need to accommodate the Syrian refugees or just refugees in general, Jersey is already struggling to accommodate the already existing migrant community, and there is evidence to suggest families who have moved here from Portugal or Poland, there are families of 5 living in one bedroom by themselves. If we can barely accommodate them, it is going to be difficult to accommodate even more refugees. Thank you.

5.1.6 Miss De La Cour:

As a response to Mr. Morby, I would just like to remind him that these are actual people, not statistics and not in fact potatoes, and as interesting as it was to listen about how many potatoes they would need to keep us going, these, like I said, are people and they have been through some really hard times and they have been kicked out of their homes, which they have no choice over because they were going to die or they were going to live. They decided to live and they have relied on people's kindness and generosity to get them this far and they want a home, and I think it is not too much to just listen to them and even just provide the minimum of 40 people. They are desperate. It is completely different. If you were in that situation, I am sure you would rely on somebody's generosity.

5.1.7 Mr. O'Neill:

I was just wondering why specifically Syrian refugees. Obviously there is a large crisis there, but that is in the whole geopolitical area, obviously not just Syria. So why just Syria and how do you identify just Syrian refugees?

5.1.8 Mr. Ventura:

First of all, I would like to say that was a beautiful speech by Miss Box. It was very good, in fact. Secondly, I think, in this matter, we have to be very ethical and we cannot just look in the point of view of statistics. Although they are important, I do not feel as we should look at this as some numbers or: "Are we going to be able to do it?" because these are real people with real families, real kids. They are running away from their own country, their own homes, because they were made to. They did not choose that. For example, in my case, I choose to come to Jersey. They did not. They are made to leave their own countries. So I think, in the terms of the language barriers and what we would need, they would have no problem because they just want to be welcomed somewhere. They do not care where it is; they do not care what they have to go through. They just want a place they can call home. They just want somewhere to be. They just want somewhere to feel safe. That is one of the things people, I think they should realise, because we as a community, we think we are fine and we are safe, but one day that might change. That changed for them and it was a radical, radical change. They suffered a lot, and I just think we should give them, even if it is not 400, even if it is 40, even if it is 10 ... any would help because we are helping someone, and I think that is one of the most important things as a human being we should do, which is help others and not focus so much on ... **[Approbation]**

The Connétable of St. Clement (in the Chair):

We are going to run into time problem. I am delighted that so many people want to speak, are speaking so well and speaking at length. However, we have still got another 3 propositions after this debate, and I would like to finish not too long after 5.00 p.m. So what I am going to do now is to call on Miss Fearn, the seconder, and then ask the proposer to sum up so that we can give all the propositions a reasonable amount of time for discussion. I hope you will approve of that decision. So, Miss Fearn.

5.1.9 Miss Fearn:

In response to Miss Flynn and Mr. Morby and Miss Green and Miss Radcliffe over concerns about housing, Andium Homes is building over 1,000 new homes before the end of 2020. So if they accelerate current plans and build more homes before the end of 2020, then we will easily be able to accommodate 400 extra people and it really is not that much more of a strain on the already existing infrastructure. The point that Mr. Flynn raised about the mosque, should we not be increasing diversity by encouraging more people to come to the Island instead of creating this discrimination against people? I strongly, strongly agree with Mr. Ventura, and I thought that your speech was very emotional and surely that just proves the point that we should be increasing diversity instead of discriminating against it. Thank you. **[Approbation]**

5.1.10 Miss Pallent:

Firstly I want to agree, as well as Miss Fearn, that, Mr. Ventura, your speech was incredible, but also I just want to clarify some logistical issues that obviously we did not explain because we do not want to bore you, but it is fine; we will now. The plan is that although we are taking 400 Syrian refugees, we use "Syrian" basically just to identify

the area of Middle East because there are wars going on all over the world. That is basically why we use that term. Also, we are not taking them all in at once. We are certainly not going to open up the gates and 400 refugees are going to hop on Condor Ferries. We are going to take over a 5-year period where the first year is purely preparation, where that is time to have extra investment in Andium Homes so they can build more homes quickly and then also an extension into Highlands and St. Brelade's in their English-speaking departments where in fact classes in Highlands at the moment are being cancelled because not enough people are there to take them. Also, as brilliantly pointed out by Beaulieu, there is a major issue language-wise with a lot of people in the Island. So this will benefit us long-term. We are aware that this is not an easy decision and we also realise that we are not taking the easy option. However, it is important to remember that often what is right is also not what is easy, and it is a decision that countries throughout humanity have had to face. Germany had to face it in the 1930s with Nazism. Russians had to face it with Putin. This is our decision now, and I do not know about anybody else in this room, but when my kids talk to me about the refugee crisis that happened in the 2010s, I do not want to tell them about how we were too hard-hearted to take a few extra people. Thank you. **[Approbation]**

The Connétable of St. Clement (in the Chair):

I call on Miss Box to sum up.

5.1.11 Miss Box:

To summarise, I feel that Miss Pallent covered very well the logistics of our plan, while Mr. Ventura did put across beautifully the emotive side of our argument, and I think we managed to answer most of the questions put across to us. I think, Mr. Flynn, in regards to the mosque, J.C.G. seats 900 plus all the parents in a church, one at a time. If we had 400, they could all fit in the mosque. Thank you. **[Approbation]**