

STATES OF JERSEY



PRISON BOARD OF VISITORS: REPORT FOR 2005

**Presented to the States on 26th May 2006
by the Minister for Home Affairs**

STATES GREFFE

REPORT

During the year under review, the Board met at the Prison on 12 occasions and received 59 applications from inmates. A total of 9 adjudications were also dealt with and it is worthy of note that in response to increasing demand from prisoners, legal representation was evident at 5 of these sittings. No dissent from the awards made by the Board were recorded, neither from the prisoners concerned nor from their counsel.

In between the Board meetings, individual members made 12 visits to the prison and they dealt with a total of 63 applications, many of which required follow-up action with telephone calls to lawyers, police, etc.

Although the members of the Board know that wherever possible transfers are made to prisons in England and Wales, the occupancy levels at La Moye have continued to run very high (daily average 172) in what has been recognised for some time to be wholly inadequate and out-of-date buildings. The new wing, opened in 2003 and used to house enhanced-level prisoners, provided a limited amount of much needed accommodation, but the additional planned new buildings cannot be completed soon enough. In this connection, we very much hope that the Governor's recent proposals to amalgamate the next two phases of development will receive total support, as they will speed up the provision of new accommodation as well as enable savings to be made on the total capital cost.

The Board has continually been concerned at the length of time certain prisoners spend on remand and they monitor the position at each of their visits. In a number of cases, delays are inevitable due to the complexity and number of charges and pleas involved, particularly when there are co-accused, but we shall continue to ensure cases are brought before the Court as promptly as possible.

A big disappointment to the Board has been the inability to provide chaplaincy services during most, if not all the year. We know that the Governor pursued all avenues open to him and individual members of the Board also made efforts to recruit the appropriate members of the clergy to attend on a regular basis. However, the Board is pleased to note that at the time of writing this report, it would appear this position may well be resolved very shortly with the help of the newly appointed Dean and senior members of the other denominations.

We have deliberately kept this report shorter than in previous years as by far the most important event for the prison during 2005 was the inspection in June by H.M. Inspectorate of Prisons. The report was only recently made available but it is extremely comprehensive and details the very many shortcomings, some of which have existed for a very long time. There is therefore little point in our reiterating the issues, particularly as we know that these will not have come as any surprise to the Minister for Home Affairs, nor for that matter to any members of the public, as the Governor has taken every opportunity since taking up his appointment in August 2004 to highlight the extremely poor conditions at the prison. His description has been to the effect that La Moye is one of the worst he has ever seen during his 30 years with the prison service.

In our view, to modernise the prison to acceptable standards will require much political good-will, as it is not only capital which is required for new buildings, but a considerable increase in the revenue budget will be needed to provide additional staff and ancillary services on an ongoing basis. There is no short term fix.

It was of course pleasing to note that the Inspectors confirmed the friendly nature of the relationships between the prisoners and staff. We feel sure that the latter's dedication and general goodwill has enabled a relatively peaceful environment to prevail, despite the generally poor facilities.

The Board wishes to play its part, within the terms prescribed in the Prison (Board of Visitors) (Jersey) Regulations 1957, in supporting the Governor and his staff as well as the Minister, in effecting the necessary improvements. It was very much with this in mind that last year, when submitting the report for 2004, we suggested regular meetings should be held between the members of the then Committee and members of the Board. We were advised that the first meeting should take place after the inspection and we therefore hope that now the report lays out in great detail what has to be achieved, we can look forward to the first meeting taking place in the near future.

JURAT JOHN C. TIBBO
Chairman

30th March 2006