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Jersey Environment Forum  
Howard Davis Farm  
Trinity  
Jersey  
JE3 5JP

Kay Tremellen-Frost  
Scrutiny Officer  
Scrutiny Office  
States Building  
St Helier  
JE1 1BA

26<sup>th</sup> May 2004

Dear Mrs Tremellen-Frost

**Agri-Environment (Countryside Renewal) Scheme**

I write in reply to your letter of 4<sup>th</sup> May inviting submissions to the Shadow Scrutiny Panel who are investigating the above subject.

The Jersey Environment Forum has been discussing and researching the issue of changing use of agricultural land and the proposed Countryside Renewal Scheme over the last few months. The Forum has recently issued a position paper on this subject and I have the pleasure of enclosing a copy herewith by way of submission to the Panel.

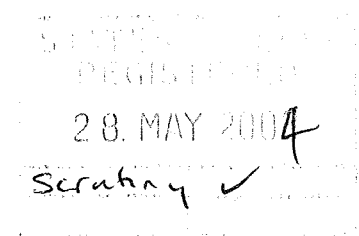
I, along with members of the Forum, would be delighted to meet the Shadow Scrutiny Panel to discuss our findings in further detail should it be considered of benefit.

Yours sincerely



James Godfrey  
Chairman  
Jersey Environment Forum

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## THE JERSEY ENVIRONMENT FORUM

### POSITION PAPER ON CHANGING USE OF AGRICULTURAL LAND & PROPOSED COUNTRYSIDE RENEWAL SCHEME – MAY 2004

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#### SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **LOSS:** There has been an apparent reduction in the amount of agricultural land being actively farmed. There is little reliable published evidence as to how much and what has happened to land coming out of production. An analysis of this should be undertaken as part of the monitoring procedure.
  2. **PROTECTION:** Agricultural land should retain a high degree of protection as a major part of the Island's economic countryside resource. This requires a legislative framework, currently through the Agricultural Land (Control of Sales and Leases) (Jersey) Law 1974. This should be reviewed with a view to extending powers to include all agricultural land.
  3. **INVESTMENT:** A countryside stewardship scheme should be introduced and adequately funded to ensure that sufficient investment takes place in the countryside to maintain its value to the Island.
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#### BACKGROUND:

4. The Jersey Environment Forum was asked to consider the changing use of agricultural land in the Island amidst considerable anecdotal evidence that land was being left uncultivated due to a contraction in the scale of the farming industry.
5. The Forum was also asked to consider the suitability of the introduction of a Countryside Renewal Scheme, which is a development of the Agri-Environment Scheme approved by the States as part of the Agriculture & Fisheries Committee Policy Report 2001.

#### CHANGING USE OF AGRICULTURAL LAND:

6. The only official source of information on the occupation of agricultural land in Jersey is derived from the annual returns of the Agricultural Census. Data for the last 34 years shows a gradual decline in occupied farmland, shown below:
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For Public Circulation. To comment on this position paper please:

Write to: The Chairman, Jersey Environment Forum, Howard Davis Farm, Trinity, JE3 5JP  
Email to: s.leclaire@gov.je

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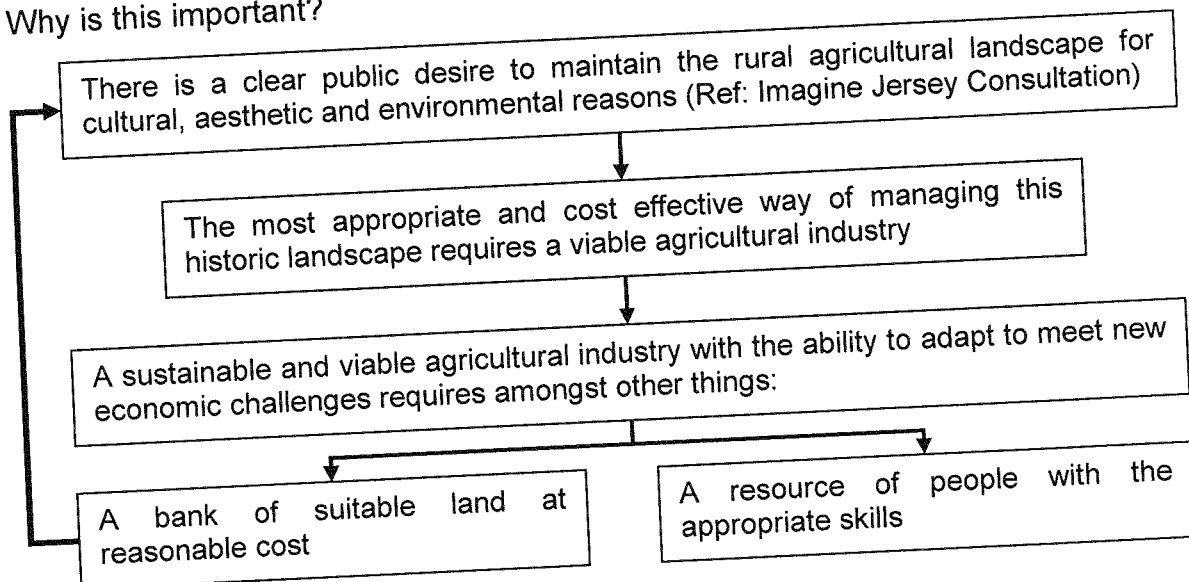
## POSITION PAPER ON CHANGING USE OF AGRICULTURAL LAND & PROPOSED COUNTRYSIDE RENEWAL SCHEME – MAY 2004

11. The Island Plan, Section 5, gives clear direction to the 'safeguarding' of farmland and the Forum supports the principles as they are set out:

- "to maintain and enhance the quality, character, diversity and distinctiveness of the Island landscape and its contributory features, natural and cultural;
- safeguard, sustain and enrich the diverse biology of Island flora and fauna through sound environmental management;
- protect agricultural land and encourage a sustainable, diverse and non-polluting agricultural industry which, in turn, helps manage the environment, creates employment and supplies high quality produce;
- ensure the long term, sustainable use of natural resources;
- avoid potential pollution through controls and safeguards;
- support and provide communities with improved access to jobs, services and housing;
- develop a strong foundation of opportunity and enterprise through economic diversification;
- safeguard and interpret Island resources of archaeological and cultural significance;
- create a rewarding setting for outdoor recreation and tourism through improved management of access, facilities, information, and rural attractions; and
- accommodate the pressures for development and other activities through the wise and sustainable use of rural land and buildings."

12. Change of use out of agriculture should be permitted only if the new use is 'soft' in nature; for example habitat restoration, tree planting or alternative 'agricultural' uses. This being said it is important to recognise that an agricultural industry is dependent on maintenance of an appropriate 'bank' of agricultural land, and therefore transfers out of agricultural use should be limited to marginal land.

13. Why is this important?



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destination is the beauty of its countryside (Jersey Visitor Surveys from 1998 onwards). On a less tangible level it is recognised that the Island's countryside is a major contributor to the quality of life of Island residents (Jersey into the Millennium – a sustainable future, and others).

21. The Forum therefore supports the introduction of a rural stewardship scheme that is appropriately funded. The question might be asked as to whether these schemes are designed as a method of supporting the farming industry or to address specific environmental objectives. The Forum believes that the answer is both; it is right that a scheme should provide a return in the form of improved environment and quality of life but it should also support farmers as they are the most cost effective and culturally acceptable way of delivering the environmental objectives.
22. The scheme must be tested to meet three criteria:
- Clarity of objectives
  - Detailed and efficient methods of delivery
  - Monitoring against baseline information to determine success
23. The initial work undertaken by the Environmental Department on 'An Environmental Monitoring Strategy for Jersey' is very pertinent and priority should be given to its further development. Without such a baseline process, change will be impossible to manage.
24. Some of the immediate investment required has been detailed in the 'Jersey Island Plan Review Countryside Character Appraisal' – December 1999, and this document's analysis and recommendations should be taken as the starting point for a Jersey countryside stewardship scheme.
25. The Forum has considered the list of components proposed in the Countryside Renewal Scheme 2004, being some 36 in total. These components are grouped within five strands which are commented on as follows:
- *Prevention of pollution and safe disposal of waste products:*  
Comment: This is an important focus that addresses current environmental issues.
  - *Protection and enhancement of biodiversity:*  
Comment: There is considerable scope to achieve positive results in the immediate future within this heading and provide constructive uses for agricultural land not currently required for production, contingent on the Monitoring Scheme as a baseline.
  - *Protection and enhancement of the visual attractiveness of the landscape:*  
Comment: This is an essential element in protecting the countryside character of the Island that is so important to tourism and general quality of life.
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