



Press Release

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Alderney President calls for urgent talks on finance and air links at Parliamentary Meeting

The President of the States of Alderney, Mr William Tate, called on leading politicians in Guernsey to urgently address two key challenges which were creating a great deal of uncertainty for Alderney.

Addressing a meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group of the Channel Islands (APPCIG) in the Houses of Parliament on Monday 10th February, he said certainty was needed on the future of Alderney's financial relationship with Guernsey and the future of its air links. He called on political leaders in Guernsey to get together with Alderney's leaders to discuss and resolve these pressing issues.

The All Party Parliamentary Group meets three times a year and on this occasion was attended by 22 Members of Parliament and Peers. Gavin St Pier represented the States of Guernsey and leading politicians from Sark, a representative from the Jersey London Office and Mr James Dent, Chairman of Alderney's Policy and Finance Committee were also in attendance. The Isle of Man was also represented at the beginning of the meeting. The Group is chaired by Andrew Rosindell MP.

Channel Islands representatives are asked to summarise key issues they are facing at the meeting. Mr Rosindell expressed his concern about the reduction in air links, saying: "I do understand how detrimental it would be to the Island of Alderney if that connectivity is severely reduced."

Ends

The full text of the President's address to the APPCIG

I invited James Dent to allow me to address you on the basis that I am not an elected politician per se, and so what I have to say to you this afternoon I hope will involve a political conversation between Gavin and James and I didn't want to feel that conversation might be hampered in any way by what I had to say. So I really wanted to give you, as the 'non-political' President, an overview of the Island and where we as a small community find ourselves.

We do not celebrate Liberation Day because there was no indigenous population to liberate on Alderney. The population was evacuated in 1940 and returned five years later to find complete devastation. 800 souls worked tirelessly and against the advice, some might say, of the UK Government, to re-establish the community of Alderney. That they did through hard work, application and dedication. Those of us who live on the Island owe them a debt. And that debt is that we maintain an ongoing, sustainable community.

That is a difficult challenge for a small community of 2,000 people now trying to find a place and a space in a global environment where we find ourselves being challenged more and more on a variety of issues around health and safety initiatives and other things which we have to comply with and which we find difficult.

We are also in a somewhat unique position in that since 1948, when Guernsey were encouraged to help Alderney become a sustainable community, we have had a financial relationship with Guernsey. And that, if one is being absolutely honest, has been on the basis that without their support we could not actually be sustainable. Now that arrangement has been in place for seventy-five years. And a conversation is going to take place about what the future looks like in terms of our fiscal relationship. And that is something we are acutely aware of. We are, to a large extent, the junior partner in this conversation. And whilst we align ourselves with Guernsey in relation to wider issues, we are still an independent jurisdiction and therefore there are occasions when our mutual interests will be in different directions.

But we do recognise that there is a concern, by some, about the level of subsidies which we are granted and we know that is a conversation that is going to have to take place. It isn't a conversation which is taking place at pace, regrettably. It's been in the ether for almost four years and we're all very conscious of it but nobody has yet put together the plan for how that conversation will move forward. And we feel, as a community, very uncertain. So what we would like is some clarity about how that conversation is going to take place so that we can start to plan for our future. So that's one real challenge that we face as a small community.

The second is around the issue of connectivity. We have an airline which is state-owned and operated by Aurigny. It was started in Alderney 51 years ago and, without going into all the why's and wherefores, that service is unlikely to be provided in the future in the same way that it has been historically. So we're going to be faced with a reduction in our capacity which will seriously damage our economic prospects. Half of the seats on the Southampton to Alderney service are filled by

tourists. That service could well end. And anyone wishing to visit Alderney will have to visit via Guernsey. That's a massive disincentive economically.

So it's really all around connectivity for Alderney. Again, the process around deciding about our air links has been going on for two years. And we still have no clarity about what the future will look like. And the consequence of that is people in a certain age demographic, are having to say: "Well, if we're not going to be able to get regular, sustainable access to the Mainland, should we still commit to live here?" And so we already losing some of our more senior residents on the Island whose families are saying "It's time to come and live nearer us."

So these are the sorts of challenges which, when I sit and listen about the much grander scale of challenges such as fishing rights post Brexit, simply bring me back to this: what we need now as a priority is certainty. Certainty in terms of our financial relationship with Guernsey and certainty in terms of our connectivity. Because only then, will we truly be able to test whether or not Alderney is a sustainable community for the 21st Century.

And if we are unable to deliver on that, then those people who returned in 1945 will no doubt look upon us and feel bitterly let down.

Notes to Media

For further information, please contact the President of the States of Alderney

