



Statement Regarding the Committee for Economic Development Guernsey's Economic Development Strategy policy letter

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GIBA welcomes the publication by the Committee for Economic Development (CfED) of the States of Guernsey Economic Development Strategy policy letter, to be considered by the States at its June meeting. As the title suggests, the strategy is not just for CfED to implement and will involve cross-departmental support and working. Discussion and agreement by the States on the main strategy areas is therefore key.

Finance sector

Whilst recognising the need to diversify the economy, GIBA is pleased that the plan is not to “throw the baby out with the bathwater” and that there is clear recognition of the importance of the finance sector to the economy and therefore of the need to continue to develop, support and maintain the island’s main sector.

Much of the work of the financial framework development is already underway, but we welcome the transfer of more of the strategic input to Guernsey Finance, working with industry.

Air links

Of all the areas in the strategy it is the work on air links that is key. It is absolutely vital that our air links are strengthened and made more reliable and affordable. We realise that CfED is bringing forward its Air Transport Licensing (ATL) policy letter and we welcome the move to an “open skies” approach for all other than “lifeline” routes. However, time is marching on and with airline timetables determined many months in advance, we need both the politicians and officers of CfED to be working now with potential carriers and airports in order to be able to capitalise on the new ATL regime when it is introduced.

Skills

Whilst there’s been lots of talk about Skills over the last few years, there’s been less action, so we are encouraged by the proposed preparation of an action-focused skills plan and look forward to some progress on this in the near future.

Red tape

Whilst our members are largely regulated businesses, any attempts to cut red tape and reduce barriers to business and make dealing with government easier must be welcomed.

Risk appetite

We have been suggesting for some time that Guernsey sets out a clear jurisdictional risk appetite. We are therefore encouraged that this is one of the 20 actions listed in the strategy and would be pleased to contribute to this review, which should assist in ensuring that Guernsey attracts high quality business, bringing benefits to both the economy and the community.

General comments

Whilst a number of the areas of focus are not finance-sector related, we are encouraged by this ambitious strategy document and the recognition that targeted investment in the economy is appropriate.

Many of us have a “glass half empty” attitude and to the extent that this spills out of the local community, from the letters page of the Guernsey Press to social media and the wider international community, this certainly doesn’t help in attracting business here – indeed, it has the opposite effect. Whilst there are undoubtedly

many challenges, there is still plenty to be positive about. We therefore welcome the recognition of the need to promote the many reasons to be positive and GIBA will certainly play its part in promoting the benefits of living, working and doing business in Guernsey.

We also welcome the recognition, at long last, of the benefit to the economy of art and sporting events.

Conclusion

So on balance all good stuff. However, although we have had plenty of long-term plans, strategies and visions in this current States, we have been relatively light on action in this current term, particularly by CfED. It is clearly recognised that the current States cannot bind the next States to strategies and visions; instead its success will ultimately be measured by what it achieves. With the next election not that far away, there is under two years left to catch up and for the current States to leave a positive legacy.

We therefore look forward to the publication of the action plan to implement the strategy and associated KPIs, shortly after the amendment or approval of the strategy by the States – and hopefully before the long summer recess.

We urge a focus on what can be achieved in the coming two years and in particular in ensuring that the absolutely highest priority is allocated to maintaining and expanding our air links, making these more reliable and affordable with both action and investment needed to achieve this.