



2020 Manifesto

Please vote for Charles Parkinson for

Ability – Compassion – Experience

Background

I read Law at Cambridge, and then qualified as both a Chartered Accountant and a Barrister in London. I returned to Guernsey, where I grew up, in 1981 and shortly afterwards founded the Praxis Group, which I lead for 21 years. It is now perhaps the largest Guernsey-controlled financial services business.

I was first elected to the States for the South-East District in 2004, and became the Deputy Minister in the Treasury & Resources Department. In 2008, I was re-elected, topping the poll in the South-East, and became the Minister of Treasury & Resources. In 2012, I stood down and spent some years researching and writing about pre-history and the 'dark ages'. My first book, 'Lisia', described the world of the Channel Islands before the Normans.

I was re-elected for St Peter Port North in a by-election in 2015, and came 2nd in the General Election of 2016 for the same District. Later that year I became President of the States Trading Supervisory Board, which looks after the trading businesses owned or operated by the States (Water, Dairy, Guernsey Electricity, Aurigny etc). In late 2017 I was elected President of the Committee for Economic Development, a position that I still hold.

I now live in the Castel, where I am renovating a bungalow. I have four adult children, and enjoy spending time with my family, boating, cooking, music and travel.

Economic Policies

The resilience of Guernsey's economy is remarkable, and it explains why we have weathered the Covid-19 pandemic better than many other countries and regions. However, I believe that we have to diversify our economy, to prepare for the structural economic challenges of the future. Quite simply, artificial intelligence is both a threat and an opportunity for us – a threat because it will reduce the need for clerical staff, but an opportunity because it will give rise to new creative industries.



Digital skills and connectivity are the foundations on which the new economy will be built, and we must continue to invest in these areas. But we also need to reduce red tape and improve on regulation to allow new businesses to flourish. I believe that we need to relax the planning laws and our population management regime to help revitalise our economy.

Our infrastructure has been through the ultimate stress test, during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the lessons learned will be reflected in a new Telecoms Strategy to be published by the Committee for Economic Development at the end of this year.

Since Jersey pulled out of the Channel Islands Competition Regulatory Authority arrangement, we need to launch our own competition regulator, and the CfED plans to design a completely new mandate appropriate to Guernsey’s needs, again by the end of this year.

With our consultants Frontier Economics, we will be reviewing the Cost Benefit Analysis of an extension to the airport runway this coming winter. We need to see if the conclusions in their original report are still valid, given the changes to the aviation industry brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The private sector has shown that it is willing to invest in Guernsey, eg in the Premier Inn and La Grande Mare developments. But the States will need to become an active investor in a number of projects, which have the potential to be catalysts for sustainable development. Examples which will need ‘pump priming’ include:-

Leales Yard	This has the potential to become a new economic hub for the north of the island, and to provide low-cost housing and community facilities
An International University	This could create a centre of excellence in renewable energy, digital content and sustainable development. Oxford University’s innovation consultancy Oxentia will be reporting back to the CfED on the viability of this project in September.
A Victor Hugo Centre	This would capitalise on the world-wide reputation of Victor Hugo and create an all-weather visitor attraction – ‘Les Misérables’ is the world’s most popular musical!
Regeneration Areas	Mill St/Mansell St, the Truchot and the Albany are all areas listed for Regeneration in the Island Development Plan, but nothing will happen there unless the States kick-starts the process.
Harbour Action Area	The harbours at St Peter Port and St Sampsons have massive potential to enhance Guernsey’s ‘Blue Economy’, providing more and better facilities for private boats, visitors on cruise ships and our vital freight links.



A considerable amount of work has been carried out on each of these projects, but they are all big ideas that need very careful planning, including wide consultation with all stakeholders. We cannot expect overnight results, but we can make substantial progress in the coming term of government.

Fiscal Policies

I have long advocated reform of our corporate tax system, to ensure that all companies doing business on Guernsey contribute to our Income Tax collections. I propose that this be achieved by a 10% corporate Income Tax, levied on a Territorial Basis (ie only on profits generated in Guernsey). Many of our most successful competitors (eg Gibraltar, Hong Kong and Singapore) use this system, and have enjoyed far higher growth rates than Guernsey's or the growth of the other Crown Dependencies over the last decade.

Reform of our corporate tax system is now urgent, because Guernsey will be running huge fiscal deficits in 2020 and subsequent years. We expect to use up nearly £200m of our reserves in alleviating the impact of Covid-19. And some of that money has been distributed to companies that currently pay no Income Tax to Guernsey. We should all be in this together!

Regulated financial services businesses on the island already pay tax at 10%, and very few of their client companies would be affected by a Territorial tax system (because they don't earn money in Guernsey). Large retailers, regulated utilities and cannabis growers currently pay tax at 20%. It is companies outside these sectors that pay 0%.

A fiscal review is scheduled to be completed by Policy & Resources Committee by June 2021, and the topic of GST will feature prominently in their proposals. While I understand that we have a major fiscal problem, I will not support any more increases in taxes on individuals until the corporate sector is paying its fair share.

In my view, the 20% Income Tax rate for individuals, and the absence of capital taxes (eg Capital Gains Tax and Inheritance Tax) are bedrocks of Guernsey's prosperity, and should not be tampered with.

Social Policies

I have very liberal views on almost all social policy issues. I led the successful amendment to bring religion and sexuality into the first phase of the anti-discrimination legislation, alongside disability and race as protected characteristics. I was only sorry that we felt we had to leave age and gender identity to a second phase, but hopefully all of the protected characteristics will have been covered by 2026. I am a Trustee of Liberate, the LGBT charity.



I seconded an amendment to legalise and regulate the supply and consumption of cannabis. We waste enormous police, court and prison service resources on prosecuting people for possession or supply of cannabis, giving (mostly young) people criminal records which may affect their ability to get jobs and lead productive lives. The scientific evidence shows that cannabis is less harmful than alcohol, the sale of which is legal and regulated.

I should state for the record that I have no personal interest in this issue, because I have never taken any illegal drugs (I don't even smoke tobacco!). Equally, I have no interest in any business concerned with the production of cannabis or any other drug, although I think the production of cannabis of pharmaceutical quality has the potential to be of some economic value to Guernsey.

The availability of affordable housing is a significant problem for our community and our economy. Young Guernsey people should be able to aspire to buying a home here, which is currently almost impossible for many, without family support. And if we want to develop new creative industries in an increasingly digital world, we have to make it possible for young technology entrepreneurs to move to Guernsey and bring their skills with them. So we must address the availability of affordable housing (and our Population Management regime, as discussed above).

As President of the States Trading Supervisory Board, I tried very hard to get the Fontaine Vinery site cleared for development as affordable housing, and the Leales Yard project and the Regeneration Areas present similar opportunities.

On education, I support the present Committee's policies of non-selective secondary education, and the creation of a Guernsey Institute to combine the College of Further Education, the GTA and the Institute of Health. However, I have always preferred smaller schools, and I abstained on the Requête calling for a review of the Committee's two-school plan for secondary schools, because the Committee would not undertake to have another look at the two-school model. Now that they are doing so, I hope the review will come up with a viable model that commands the support of teachers, probably, I suspect, a three-school model.

Guernsey's health services have performed outstandingly well, in keeping us all safe in the Covid-19 pandemic. I support the plans for the modernisation of the Princess Elizabeth Hospital, and I see potential in 'medtech' as an economic activity. This could take the form of medical research, the development of medical appliances (building on our existing industry) or medical tourism. I have been working with the Health & Social Care Committee and Blenheim Chalcott to explore the opportunities. These may have been enhanced by Guernsey's new-found reputation for competence in health matters.



Environmental Policies

We must focus on environmental policies, not only as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change, but also as a business opportunity. Gone are the days when environmental considerations were seen as being in conflict with economic aspirations: many of the most exciting investment opportunities of the next few years will arise in the Environmental, Social and Governance ('ESG') space.

As an example, a large proportion of the huge sums that the EU has set aside for the recovery from Covid-19 are earmarked for climate change investments. Opportunities for green investment, including infrastructure investment, are being created for offshore funds. And Guernsey is a world-leader in Green Finance.

However, for the island to make a convincing pitch for this business, we must "walk the walk", not just "talk the talk". Guernsey must live up to its name as 'the green island'.

Fortunately, we have made a good start. In 2004, in my maiden speech in the States, I argued against the construction of a 70,000 ton-per-annum incinerator on the Longue Hougue site at a cost of over £80m. I made headlines at the time, by suggesting that we could simply export our waste, to the consternation of members of the then Policy Council. I was told by senior politicians that this would be impossible, because "it would be illegal".

In early 2017 I had the pleasure of taking the Waste Transfer Station project through the Assembly, as President of the States Trading Supervisory Board, and today the system for exporting our waste is fully operational. Guernsey now has a recycling rate of 73%, one of the highest in the world, and we are a model for the 'circular economy'. The £32m project was delivered on time and on budget.

If the 2004 project had gone ahead, the buildings on the Longue Hougue site would have been twice as tall as the present building, with 300ft chimneys in addition. Guernsey would be importing 40,000 tons of waste every year to feed the incinerator, and we would be £50m poorer.

So we have made progress, but we must now take bold steps to decarbonise our economy. We have immense resources of renewable energy all around us and can aim to replace hydrocarbons in most road transport and home heating applications over the next decade. This process will present the island with significant economic opportunities, along the road to carbon neutrality.

My normal mode of transport in Guernsey is an electric bike, which I ride most days. One of the better aspects of lockdown was seeing whole families out walking or on their bikes, taking their two hours of exercise. Everyone was so friendly, and I really felt the community came together during that period. There was less noise and the air was cleaner. We should try to capture and retain that spirit, and to encourage people to carry on cycling. I would like Guernsey to invest in a whole network of cycle routes, to make this a safer possibility.

X VOTE PARKINSON

CHARLES PARKINSON: ABILITY | COMPASSION | EXPERIENCE

Summary

The above can only be the main points of my political agenda, given the constraints of space and bearing in mind the vast quantities of material that voters will be expected to digest. If you have any questions, please contact me by email at charles@charlesparkinson.com or on my mobile phone, 07781 120375. I will try to canvas as much of the island as I can, but cannot hope to visit 20,000 households, so please forgive me if I don't reach your front door!