Digital Policy Framework – Summary of Responses from Digital Businesses Feedback Sessions

Session 1: 7 July 2016
Session 2: 4 August 2016

Topics discussed

Digital Skills

- Concerns were raised that some teachers did not have the required skills, or the time, to competently deliver a digital curriculum. Some also noted that there was a deficit in high-quality ICT teachers.
- It was suggested that the Thinking Differently strategy should be reviewed to assess where it had been successful, and where more work needs to be done.
- Attendees recognised that funding had been allocated to schools to improve infrastructure and ICT learning, but some suggested that not all schools were prioritising effectively.
- The value of 'ICT learning' to the digital sector was discussed at length, with some suggesting that successful tech entrepreneurs are unlikely to have studied ICT at school – this comes from early interest in creative problem solving.
- It was suggested that Jersey should focus on teaching children maths, physics and the scientific method, rather than ICT.
- Other feedback on the school curriculum:
  - STEAM (STEM & the Arts) should be our focus, as this encourages creativity alongside technical knowledge and method.
  - We should engrain creative problem solving early on the school curriculum.
  - Teaching digital skills is about more than code and product development. You don't need to be a coder to be of value to the tech industries – for instance, there is a need for skilled project managers.
- Attendees agreed that there is a good opportunity for the Education Department to work with the technology community to show young people that there are opportunities beyond the finance sector.
- It was suggested that the framework should not refer to the digital skills gap as 'short term', as there will always be a lack of skills, and always some requirement to import skills. This is still happening in the Finance sector today.
- Some believed that the market should be responsible for upskilling the existing workforce as demands change.

Digital Infrastructure

- It was suggested that Government should develop a 5 / 10 year roadmap to show when various infrastructure changes will come – e.g. 5G.
- Asymmetrical upload / download broadband speeds were discussed, and a number of attendees said it should be replaced by a symmetrical model. The current approach acts as an artificial disincentive for content producers.
- CICRA's role was discussed, with a number of suggestions:

- o It should be empowered to force internet providers to ensure actual minimum internet speeds are as advertised, and generally hold providers to account for the quality of service provision.
  - o It should investigate whether it is fair to force customers to pay for a landline connection with every broadband package.
- A number of attendees wanted to see free Public Wi-Fi – even with low speeds – explored and committed to soon. This could start with St Helier, and then rollout across the Island over time.
- The Hospital's free WiFi was discussed, and it was suggested that it could be used as a successful case study in the Framework.
- It was suggested that internet service providers should not charge businesses for the amount of data consumed – this acts as a barrier for businesses and as a disincentive for them to offer free Wi-Fi to customers or clients.
- It was suggested that the Airport's free WiFi should be analysed to explore further developments – e.g. what are people searching for? What could be learnt from that?
- A number of attendees agreed that Government should explore how our infrastructure aligns with the Island's overall vision and the way we want the community to evolve.
- Promoting our strong infrastructure was seen by many as a way to encourage and facilitate more remote working.

Government Digital Transformation

- The attendees agreed that eGov has to be delivered at a much greater pace to rebuild public and industry confidence.
- Attendees discussed the transparency of the eGov programme, and suggested that opening it up would help to improve execution speeds and reduce public criticism of the programme.
- Attendees discussed the programme's governance, and suggested that the internal sign-off process may be slowing down the programme and reducing visibility of successes.

Innovative and Diverse Digital Economy

- It was suggested that the framework should be clearer on defining Jersey's ambition for growing its technology sector.
- Attendees agreed that the framework should make commitments and have measurable output-focussed targets.
- Attendees suggested that if we want the technology sector to have a real economic impact, digital businesses must sell goods and services globally, not just in Jersey.
- A number of attendees suggested that this is the most important section, and that it was important that we better define what we want to achieve, and how we can achieve it.
- Attendees agreed that it will be very difficult to grow the tech sector without considerable immigration, which would mean favourable immigration policy for tech professionals.
- We could set up an advanced learning centre for specialised tech degrees, particularly postgraduate qualifications in things like cyber security.
- Suggestions were made to make it easier to get housing for tech immigrants, such as a 'Start-Up Halls of Residence".

- It was suggested that our economic objectives should be costed, and financial commitments made
- A number of additional suggestions were made:
  - We could introduce a 'Start-up Visa' / 'Tech-Licence' scheme.
  - We could provide cash-incentives to attract Start-ups to take root in Jersey.
  - We could enable crowdfunding as an alternative source of funding for start-ups.
  - We could introduce a scheme whereby experts assess local proposals / business cases and recommend to Angel Investors / Venture Capitalists.
  - We could introduce a scheme whereby digital businesses compete for funding from a pot of money, with applications assessed by world-class technology leaders.

Emerging Technologies

- A number of attendees believed that the emerging technologies landscape was chaotic and unpredictable, and as such it was unwise for government to concentrate on any specific technologies – such as blockchain.
- Many in the room agreed that government was too slow when it came to effectively legislating around emerging technologies. Attendees agreed that the government's Virtual Currency legislation was a real bonus for Jersey, but felt that it took too long to develop and lodge.
- Attendees discussed Air BNB. They felt that government needed to give a clearer message on whether being an Air BNB host in Jersey was legal, illegal or extralegal. They called for a quick and clear statement on this.
- It was suggested that there was a resourcing bottleneck in the civil service legal office that slowed down new legislation for emerging technologies.
- Attendees suggested that Jersey needed a mechanism to reach out to and attract foreign start-ups working in emerging technology areas.
- A number of attendees agreed that the government should fund expert research into what emerging technology areas would be best suited to Jersey.
- Attendees agreed that government and its regulators should support setting up sandboxes for innovative firms to operate in safely.
- One attendee suggested that Jersey's government should operate a "just do it" approach to new technology areas that have yet to be legislated, so long as businesses are open about what they are doing.
- A few people felt that Jersey Business should improve its Search Engine Optimisation to be more instantly accessible and findable to innovative businesses in Jersey.
- A number of attendees suggested that Digital Jersey should have the right to sense-check relevant new legislation before it's enacted to ensure it does not damage digital businesses.
- One attendee wanted to see a coherent and proactive digital sector strategy from Locate Jersey.
- Attendees felt that government should be asking the local sector more questions about emerging technologies, rather than stumbling around in the dark.

Regulatory Environment

- Some felt that Jersey follows the European model of regulation too closely, which they saw as restrictive, prohibitive and risk averse. They felt that Jersey should try to align itself more closely with the American and Asian models which are more business-friendly.
- Some believed that government should have a culture of iterating regulations and legislation to allow this to be more responsive to changes in the business environment, particularly in the digital sector.
- Attendees agreed that Jersey needed clearer signposting of its Intellectual Property regime.

A number of the issues on regulation were covered in the discussion around emerging technologies, so I have not repeated them here.

Cyber Security

- Attendees agreed that they did not want government to impose a "Great Firewall of Jersey", as this could prove to be restrictive for businesses and would not be effective in protecting Jersey against cyber threats.
- It was noted that every member of Jersey's financial services sector receives cyber security training, which was applauded.
- A cyber security expert in the room pointed out that almost all data breaches begin with either:
    - An employee opening a phishing email
    - Someone being granted unauthorised access to a system or to information
    They suggested that any cyber security strategy from government should bear this in mind. It is about more than securing technology, it is also about people and premises.

Data Protection

- Some in the room felt that government should not align its regulation directly with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation, as this could be damaging to local businesses and affect trade with jurisdictions outside the EU, such as in Asia.
- Attendees agreed that it was essential that Jersey remained a data-transfer partner with the EU, as otherwise this would greatly damage Jersey's financial services companies that interact with or through EU countries.
- Attendees agreed that it was important we ensure our regulation allows us access to the EU market, while also shaping it to allow and encourage interaction with markets elsewhere in the world.
- Attendees called for a clarification on Jersey's approach to brief notification. They wanted to know whether a business must inform the regulator and / or the public whenever they suffer a data breach.
- Some attendees suggested that the GDPR was so troublesome that it may never be enacted anywhere, but they agreed we should consider our options and be prepared for when it is currently due to be enacted in May 2018.
- Attendees agreed that it made sense for Jersey to work with Guernsey on data protection regulation since a number of businesses have a presence in both islands and would benefit from aligned regulation.