

**REPORT PROVIDING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR  
MODERNISING AND COMMERCIALISING THE  
JERSEY BATTLE OF FLOWERS**

March 2015

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## **1. Overview:**

Having met with all stakeholders originally identified within the project brief and detailed within the appendix, the following conclusions have been formed. All conclusions are based upon the feedback and information gained within the interviews conducted and subsequent online and document-based research and also the attendance of both events in 2014.

The Jersey Battle of Flowers is, at its very roots, a community event. It is an event that has, over periods of time, gained interest internationally, making it an appealing time of year for tourists to visit the island. It would appear that this is unfortunately no longer the case and the number of visitors still coming to the island specifically to attend the event is declining, mainly due to this being an ageing sector of the population.

There is no doubting the dedication and commitment shown by the vast number of volunteers who work tirelessly to produce the floats, known as 'exhibits', and those who hold positions on the board; this also extends to those currently holding paid positions. Whilst it is obvious that without all of them the event would be unable to take place, it is quite apparent that there is notable division between the exhibitors and the board over the current way the event itself is run. It is apparent that a breakdown in communication has led to this division increasing over time. Feelings of dissatisfaction from the current exhibitors has led to an event that is considered, by them, to be no longer fit for purpose.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst float production costs continue to escalate, there is a danger that the quality and number of exhibitors participating will also continue to fall; which will ultimately lead to a continued decline in the quality of the event.

It appears that the answer is much more deep-rooted than simply applying a few tweaks to modernise and commercialise the current parade. A great many questions have been raised throughout this process which remain unanswered, in particular regarding the current allocation of funds to the Association; are all those who benefit from funding allocation members of the Association; the overall governance of the Association; the overall event costs; the judging process and more.

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<sup>1</sup> Exhibitors Advisory Panel Meeting – 9<sup>th</sup> September 2014

Whilst many people expressed creative ways to improve the event, most of these suggestions are costly and would require not only additional funds but also additional physical resources and expertise. Within this report a number of options are outlined, they include: a restructuring of the current board; alterations to the event if kept in its existing format and additional ways to move away from the current format.

Due to the current allocation of their grant funding from the Economic Development Department (Jersey Tourism), it is apparent that the event is trying to hold on to its 'tourism' categorisation, when in reality a return to the community-based origins of the event should be given serious consideration. This is fundamentally a community event that provides an enhancement to a visitor's experience on island, rather than a specific motivation to visit. The vast majority of internationally well-known events began as those produced *by* their community *for* their community, the most successful of which have gone on to become world famous; this was once the case for the Battle of Flowers. In order to regain the reputation the event once had, it first needs to re-ingratiate itself into the island's community.

Those sitting on the board as well as current and past exhibitors have, previously mooted many ideas about ways in which things could move forward. These ideas are often dismissed before being fully explored; this is principally due to potential additional costs associated with some of them, or due to a general lack of appetite for change.

Serious consideration needs to be given to the allocation of funding, including, but not limited to, the conditions which are imposed upon its allocation. In order for the Battle of Flowers Parade to become self-sustaining (and no longer reliant upon grant-funding), it needs to focus on the current high infrastructure costs. Without the funding it receives from government, there is simply no way the event will be able to survive long-term in its current format, unless dramatic changes to the physical construction of the event itself are considered.

It would be a worthwhile exercise to redefine the exact purpose of the event and the role of the Association within this. If a clear definition were agreed upon this would enable greater clarity as to the direction the event should take in the future. If the emphasis continues to be on satisfying the longstanding traditional visitors needs and wants the longevity of the event will be in serious question. Not only is this a declining population, but also it continues to place greater demands on the arenas construction and location, restricting any significant changes.

## **2. Review of Jersey Battle of Flowers Parade in its current format.**

In 1902 the first Jersey Battle of Flowers was organised in celebration of the Coronation of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra. After a successful first parade, the organisers decided to repeat the parade the following year, and so the tradition was born.

After two periods when the Battle didn't take place, it wasn't until the 1950s that a group of local businessmen decided that the Battle should be revived as a focus for the community as well as providing an additional attraction for the island's emerging tourism industry.

The current event takes place on two separate days, traditionally the afternoon of the second Thursday in August and the evening of the following day. The daytime parade lasts for approximately one hour and 15 minutes and the Moonlight Parade a little longer due to the fireworks display, which marks the end of the parade and provides a finale to the event.

The 2014 parade saw around 24 exhibitors displaying their floats; of these there were only four 'elite' style floats within the larger 45ft category. It has been noted that the divide is becoming more noticeable, with the smaller junior floats beginning to look increasingly inferior to the larger senior ones and the number of those isn't increasing. Suggestions have been made to extend the time the parade takes; these include the introduction of a pre-parade in the arena so that spectators have something to watch before the floats enter. The current events director has a wide range of excellent ideas to offer, many of which are often dismissed without being given due consideration, the reasons for this aren't clear.

What must not be forgotten is, this is an event which relies upon a very enthusiastic band of volunteers without whom the event would not be able to happen each year. Aside from two salaried members of staff (both zero hour/ part time), the people involved in the event are volunteers. By the time the floats make it to the arena, the total number of those involved is believed to extend to around 2,500. Whilst this is a large number of people, the Battle has a reputation for operating in well-established 'existing teams' that aren't always welcoming to new volunteers.

Whilst in its current format, the event is considered difficult to categorise with regard to what it is trying to achieve and to whom it appeals, making it challenging to market to overseas visitors and to potential commercial sponsors. David de Carteret of Jersey Tourism suggested introducing a theme to the event in the future may help to mitigate this issue<sup>2</sup> and aid those trying to market the event. The typical demographic of those attending is believed to be over the age of 60 and under the age of 11\*<sup>3</sup>. It will be challenging to sustain these audiences in the future, and a wider on-island audience needs to be re-engaged.

The majority of stakeholders interviewed stated it was difficult to determine whether the event remained a tourist attraction when booking holidays or is now simply a community event (with a few remaining die-hard off-island followers). It was felt that whilst it remains under the tourism umbrella, corporate sponsorship will be difficult to obtain as the event does not satisfy most companies' Corporate and Social Responsibility remit due to the narrow section of the island's community that it currently engages with. Although the Association has charitable status, there is little evidence that alternative avenues for acquiring funding have been explored, these include, but are not limited to the Jersey Association of Charities Grant scheme; in fact funds are raised for a dedicated on-island charity on an annual basis, which is noble but seems misguided.

It is clear from those currently participating that too much emphasis is put on the 'hey day' of Battle and people appear to be working tirelessly to recapture this – a seemingly impossible task when the world has become a much larger place. This year's Battle was deemed a great success, despite the inclement weather, by those directly involved.<sup>4</sup>

## 2.1 Ticket costs:

### Grand Day Parade - Thursday 14th August

Executive Covered Grandstand	£34.00
Standard Grandstand (Child under 5 yrs on knee)	£22.00 FOC
Pavement Chairs	£15.00
P/Chairs Children (under 12)	£7.00
Wheelchairs	£11.00
Wheelchair Companion (2 per Wheelchair)	£15.00
Adult Standing	£7.00
Child Standing (Under 12 yrs)	FOC

### Moonlight Parade - Friday 15th August

Executive Covered Grandstand	£28.00
Standard Grandstand (Child under 5 yrs on knee)	£20.00 FOC
Pavement Chairs	£14.00
P/Chairs Children (under 12)	£7.00
Wheelchairs	£11.00
Wheelchair Companion (2 per Wheelchair)	£14.00
Adult Standing	£7.00
Child Standing (Under 12 yrs)	FOC

<sup>2</sup> David De Carteret, Director Jersey Tourism

<sup>3</sup> Information provided by the Events Director.

<sup>4</sup> Event Directors post event report.

Currently there are no family ticket options, which seems like an oversight, particularly when considering the target audience. This means that if you are bringing a child over 12 then you can expect to pay up to £68 for two seats in the most expensive grandstand, or £14 for you both to stand. Many of those interviewed were unaware of the high cost of tickets; this was perhaps due to most of them being invited to attend the event as guests of the Association.

The cost of importing the fixed grandstand seating is over £100,000 - a significant cost to the event. Whilst this does provide a sizeable income, it appears that there are ways this cost could be minimised whilst retaining a satisfactory income, by looking to increase the lower cost, higher yielding ticket options. The Island Games Committee has made an investment in seating that will be available to hire for on-island events (costs TBC). This will provide 750 bench-style seats, similar to those seen at sporting events. These are easily erected and dismantled on-site, resulting in less inconvenience to residents and users of the car parks that are currently closed for the duration of the erection of the static seating.

A white plastic chair, like those currently used for 'pavement seats', can be sourced on-island and cost an average of £1.75 to hire, resulting in a healthy profit and a reduction in additional freight and labour costs. These chairs are also easy to put in situ and then equally easy to remove once the parade has finished. Currently a number of 'pavement seats' are removed in order to allow for an increased capacity for those wishing to stand for the moonlight parade. Having spoken to a local provider of such seating it was agreed that the company would be happy to procure additional seating if there was a demand.

The cost of a ticket covers entrance to the parade and no more. Purchasing a programme costs an additional £3, of which half is a donation to the Associations chosen charities.

From calculations based upon the figures provided by the events Director, it is estimated that the potential income from ticket sales is £324, 122 over both events. It is believed the income from ticket sales at this year's event was around £290,000, but this figure is awaiting final confirmation at the AGM at the end of 2014.

<b>Day Parade Ticket Option<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>Ticket Cost</b>	<b>Forecast (NB this is based on the maximum ticket price being paid and not allowing for concessions).</b>
Executive Grandstand – Capacity 484	£34.00	£16,456
Standard Grandstand – Total capacity - 4029	£22.00	£88,638
Pavement Seats Day - 2160	£15.00	£32,400

<sup>5</sup> Figures provided by the Events Director.

Walk In Standing Day - 2500	£7.00	£17,500
Wheelchair Seats – capacity 200	£11.00	£2,200
<b>TOTAL</b>		£157,194

<b>Moonlight Parade Ticket Option</b>	<b>Ticket Cost</b>	<b>Forecast (NB this is based on the maximum ticket price being paid and not allowing for concessions).</b>
Executive Grandstand – Capacity 484	£28.00	£13,552
Standard Grandstand – Total capacity - 4029	£20.00	£80,000
Pavement Seats Day - 1584	£14.00	£22,176
Walk In Standing Day - 7000	£7.00	£49,000
Wheelchair Seats – capacity 200	£11.00	£2,200
<b>TOTAL</b>		£166,928

## 2.2 The current dates and timing – should Battle move to the weekend?

The board has previously investigated changing the day the event takes place, so the parade takes place either over a weekend or on Friday/Saturday. This idea has never managed to come to fruition for a variety of reasons:

- Opposition from the exhibitors - many of them take annual holiday in order to build the floats and for them the weekend is essential to ‘recover’ ahead of returning to work the following Monday.
- Visitors who are coming to the island specifically for Battle are often here for a seven-day holiday from ‘Saturday to Saturday’.
- The dates in August mean that children can more easily get involved in float building as they are on their summer holidays.

In order for the major ‘exhibitors’ to continue participating, they have requested that the calendar dates remain unaltered. It is important to remember that the ‘exhibitors’ are responsible for providing the content of the parade and without them the event would not be able to take place.

From a commercial perspective, other than the small number of those that plan their holiday around the Battle, this week in August is one of the two busiest in the hospitality calendar, with

those interviewed<sup>6</sup> reporting full occupancy during this and the week preceding Battle. The question remains: is this therefore an appropriate allocation of such a high spend from the tourism budget? Should the event be moved instead to a shoulder month, or earlier in the summer season? This, of course, very much depends on the final decision as to whether or not the Battle remains categorised as a tourist 'attraction'.

### **2.3 The 'Exhibitors' and their guarantees.**

The exhibitors have developed a reputation for being incredibly demanding and resistant to change.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, there seems to have been a quite serious breakdown in the communication between the exhibitors and the current board which has led to a fractious relationship where neither party are satisfied they are being well represented. This dissatisfaction only goes to further the divide between the two parties that are currently essential to the successful running of the event.

Having met with the Exhibitors' Advisory Panel<sup>8</sup> and having attended the 'Exhibitors' Snags Meeting'<sup>9</sup> post event, it is apparent that a significant number of those participating aren't happy with the relationship between the exhibitors and members of the current board, in particular the current Chairman. Very few of them are Association members, as there is a belief that the current status quo will remain, whatever they say, suggesting their membership fees will be wasted along with the voting rights they bring.

There is nothing within the constitution that states that those who are participating in the event and ultimately benefiting from the grant allocated to the Association are obliged to be members of the Association. The members' benefits are focused on voting in the Chairman, Vice Chairman and members of the board, yet doesn't state that they are eligible for funding to aid the building of their floats.

*The 'guarantees' given to the exhibitors are calculated on the number of floats in the parade, and then, based on the previous year's figure, the money is split according to the size of float: e.g. – For a large 45ft float, a guarantee of £9,500 is given; for a small junior float a guarantee of £1,100 is given; there are other guarantees in the middle of these two figures.*

*Deducted from each float's guarantees are their flower bills - these are individually calculated and set against each person's guarantee. A few other expenses are deducted for service, shed rental if appropriate (which incidentally is far too low at £300 a year for a large 45 ft float!) etc. At the end of September, either an invoice is sent out to the respective float as reimbursement for additional*

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<sup>6</sup> Members of the Tourism Shadow Board.

<sup>7</sup> Association Board Meeting.

<sup>8</sup> Exhibitors Advisory Panel Meeting – 9<sup>th</sup> September 2014

<sup>9</sup> Exhibitors Snags Meeting – 16<sup>th</sup> September 2014

*sums owed greater than their guarantee, or a cheque is written out to those who have a credit balance.*<sup>10</sup>

The funding allocated contributes to the cost of building the floats. Exhibitors are then responsible for finding their own additional funding, through sponsorship and fundraising.

### **3.0 Suggestions to aid the modernisation of the existing event.**

Winning the hearts and minds of the Jersey public is vital to the future success of the Jersey Battle of Flowers Parade. The whole island community needs to be involved in order to regain the enthusiasm and vibrancy the Battle once benefitted from.

#### **3.1 Have a representation from all 12 parishes.**<sup>11</sup>

During my interview with John Henwood (Chairman of the Tourism Shadow Board), he suggested in order for the event to be a *true* Jersey Battle of Flowers, all 12 parishes **must** be represented. This may mean that the allocation of the guarantees or funding would need to be apportioned differently, perhaps given directly to the Parish Connetables, in order that they can be responsible for their Parish being represented in the parade. Further investigation in to the viability and the process of allocation should be undertaken.

#### **3.2 Simplify the judging process.**

The consensus from the current exhibitors<sup>12</sup> is that they aren't in it 'for the silverware' and the current judging process is overly complicated and not as transparent as it should be. It also has the overwhelmingly detrimental effect of removing the 'fun' from the event - something that was repeatedly mentioned as lacking by many of those interviewed.

Nowhere in the current programme is there an explanation of the judging process and/or categories for which prizes are awarded, leaving the spectators unaware as to why a float has won.

Awards could be more simply categorised: Gold, Silver or Bronze (as per the Chelsea Flower Show), with clear and simple descriptions as to the standard meriting each award. These criteria could be added to the programme content to enable spectators to understand the awards.

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<sup>10</sup> Information provided by Jackie Donald – Event Director.

<sup>11</sup> John Henwood, Tourism Advisory Panel Chairman

<sup>12</sup> Exhibitors Advisory Panel Meeting – 9<sup>th</sup> September 2014

It is felt the current rulebook is unnecessarily complicated and has resulted in some Parishes being unable to compete. In one particular case this is due in part to them being unable enter a junior float without entering a larger float.

The Chelsea Flower Show has two tiers of judging: three judges visit one day before the gardens are open to the public, and then a second tier of four additional judges attend on the day the gardens open. These results are then combined and the final judgment is made and publicised.

Some of the current exhibitors had good ideas on how to best judge the floats. One suggestion included allocating a representative from those participating, who then judges every float other than their own. Judges are currently difficult to recruit and there is some feeling that the judges aren't impartial enough.<sup>13</sup>

### **3.3 Open the closed doors.**

There is a great deal of myth surrounding the Battle of Flowers; much of this is self-generated and is perhaps due in part to the stringent requirements imposed upon the exhibitors within the rulebook. It appears that the unnecessary pressure of the judging process has taken away much of the 'fun' once associated with the event.

Over a number of years, these barriers have begun to be broken down with pre-battle shed tours being organised in the days leading up to the event. Independent tour operators, who ultimately gain financially from organising them, currently offer them. Tours could perhaps be organised by the Association to provide added value to both spectators and corporate sponsors - of course there is potential here to gain much-needed income for the Association, and then in turn for the participants.

### **3.4 Static Display – People's Park.**

Although there is currently an opportunity for spectators to view the floats at Millbrook Park, following both the judging process and the daytime parade, access is considered difficult, with limited parking and little infrastructure. There is also a question mark over the availability of this land in the future due to potential development by the owner. The idea of a ticketed static display was mentioned at the Exhibitors' Advisory Panel and the response was positive.

Therefore the recommendation is; floats are relocated to People's Park, making this both the start of the parade and also the home of a fully accessible static display. Participants would be able to use this as an opportunity to truly 'exhibit' their floats, providing visitors with

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<sup>13</sup> Exhibitors Advisory Panel Meeting – 9<sup>th</sup> September 2014

information detailing the hours of work, number of people, quantity of flowers involved and also displaying costume and stand designs and beyond.

Rough infrastructure costing, based on previous events held at People's Park, suggest that this would cost around £5,625 for a week. The basic cost would include providing Heras fencing around the whole perimeter of the park, a 15m x 40m unlined basic marquee structure providing 5,750 sq ft of covered space and lighting towers to cover each corner of the park. The addition of further pods or structures would incur additional costs.

Enclosing and fencing the area would enable a ticketed entry point. Adding to the static display of the floats, it would be easy to bring in retailers, a Genuine Jersey producers market, food and drink stalls, and possibly activities such as flower arranging classes and workshops scheduled throughout the day. This covered space could very easily provide an additional income stream for the Association and could also the added value, which spectators are looking for pre and post parade. The space could easily lend itself to a smaller version of something similar to the West Show, held in St Peter. It would also present a genuine commercial opportunity for local producers, as the covered section could be open for the week, or a few days, leading up to the Battle, rather than just for the few hours the parade is held. The 'Village' would also be an excellent asset, with naming rights for a potential sponsor.

### **3.5 Sustainability – local produce.**

The 'Zundert Flower Parade' is a festival held in the Netherlands, it has many similarities to the Jersey Battle of Flowers:

- Parade floats are designed and built by the 20 hamlets of the area.
- Volunteers do *everything*, organising the event and building floats etc.
- The cultivation of the dahlias, which form the basis of all of the floats is done locally.

*"In order to prepare the floats for the parade, hundreds of people join together. The art of building the Zundert Parade floats has been passed down from generation to generation"<sup>14</sup>. Not only this, but the floats are spectacular!*

Jersey was once a major floral exporting island, but nowadays almost all the flowers for battle are imported from as far away as South America, via Holland. John Henwood, Chairman of the Tourism Shadow Board suggested working with Jersey farmers to fill the fallow time following the potato harvest and fill the fields with asters, marigolds or, taking inspiration from the Netherlands, dahlias. The idea of creating carpets of beautiful, colourful flowers would result in a spectacle for arriving air passengers whilst creating interest and raising awareness of the Battle

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<sup>14</sup> [www.corsozundert.nl](http://www.corsozundert.nl)

pre event, as well as returning to the origins of the event, with flowers being grown on-island. These particular flowers are perennials and should prove hardy enough to be grown outside.

This would provide pre-promotion, potential cost savings, as well as an additional 'local' element, perhaps even making the floats a Genuine Jersey product.

### **3.6 Providing value - not just two days.**

The current argument regarding a lack of commercial engagement, aside from the categorisation of the event, is that people don't see any value in the event due to its short length - it isn't considered a great investment, from either a commercial or a sponsor's perspective. There are many simple ways in which this could be changed to provide a year-round proposition and concurrent brand exposure.

Rather than just focusing on the two days of the event, an annual approach should be taken. The floats aren't built in just a matter of days, which provides an opportunity to tell the 'story' of how the floats are planned and created over a 12-month period. All those participating should be encouraged to utilise social media channels, working together for the greater good of the event and assisting with what is currently the sole responsibility of the Event Director. As long as the Jersey Battle of Flowers is 'tagged' in all posts, there is mutual benefit to all, but the Association needs to be leading the way and helping those that are uncertain.

**Social Media** – Don't just stop at Facebook and Twitter. If succession planning is something to be considered then widening the net of the Battle's social media audience is essential; Instagram and Pinterest both have great value and lend themselves perfectly to the fantastic photographs that can be captured of the build up to the event. If this falls out of the realms of exhibitors' current skills set, then responsibility should be passed to one of the younger participants or the office administrator, who is familiar with these social media channels.

**E-Newsletters** – communicate with the existing database of previous ticket purchasers and attendees of the event. The content of these newsletters doesn't have to be lengthy, but it's a great way to talk to your audience. They also offer the opportunity to sell any merchandise, pre-sell tickets for Battle and, of course, provide sponsors an opportunity to expose their brand.

**Website** – this has had an update and is far more modern than in previous years and is beginning to be used as a more effective communication channel with its existing audience.

**Blog** – this could be similar to the *temps passé*, posting historical information and photographs of Battle through the ages.

**Battle stalwarts and Association members focus** - The JEP already do this in the weeks leading up to the event, but this could be adopted by the Association and it would provide content for both the newsletters and the blog.

### **3.7 Re-introduction of Carnival Classes – Build your own float.**

Reviving the carnival classes has been suggested<sup>15</sup>. These classes previously provided additional entertainment prior to the larger floats entering the arena. It is unclear why the pre-parade carnival classes were removed, but bringing them back could provide a twofold benefit: a greater number of exhibitors participating and additional entertainment for spectators.

One exhibitor<sup>16</sup> suggested offering corporate organisations the chance to buy a '*build your own pedal powered float kit*'. Everyone would receive exactly the same materials and instructions so that they could construct their own 'exhibit'. The idea would be to provide workshops in the quieter months leading up to battle so people could gain the necessary skills to build a quality 'exhibit'.

The Carnival Classes could be a fantastic and easy introduction to those who perhaps don't have an existing Association with Battle, but see the great potential to be able to access the audience of spectators attending the event. Sports clubs, for example, may see this as a good recruitment opportunity - being able to raise their profile within the island and this could easily be sold to companies on the island, not only as a team building event but also as a route into becoming involved in Battle.

### **3.8 Re routing the parade.**

The possibility of rerouting the parade was suggested by a number of stakeholders during the interview process; perhaps considering the route used in the Fête de Noué Christmas parade by entering in to the town centre.

This is more complicated than first anticipated and would need further exploration; although the concept is possible, it would require limiting the sizes of the participating floats due to the tight

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<sup>15</sup> Exhibitors Advisory Panel Meeting – 9<sup>th</sup> September 2014

<sup>16</sup> Float Building Workshops – Paul Michel of the Optimists group.

corners that would need to be navigated through town. A town centre parade would also necessitate a number of road closures. Once again, the Connetable was willing to explore the possibility of a town centre parade - he saw the potential commercial benefit to local retailers; keeping people within the proximity of the shopping area would mean the retailers wouldn't be losing custom, as they currently do. It would also provide further opportunities for them to become involved in animating the event, buying in to it, rather than closing their doors.

### **3.9 Miss Battle.**

Along with the Battle the role of Miss Battle is one steeped in history, historically Miss Battle has been recruited as a figurehead who represents the island, one who spends the 12 months of her term as Miss Battle working as an ambassador for the island and also raising money for the charity associated with the event. The charitable element of this role is no longer as active.

### **3.10 Mr. Battle**

Ray Quinn was widely viewed as the incorrect choice for 2014's Mr. Battle; he brought little value to the parade.<sup>17</sup> Could the role be changed in favour of a local or alternative celebrity?<sup>18</sup> In principle the Board has agreed this already, with the money previously spent on bringing over a non-essential, low profile celebrity being reallocated.

That being said, it seems there is perhaps a missed opportunity when securing a celebrity like Ray Quinn; he does have a following within the island and in fact returned to perform a concert for those fans later in the year. Why this concert was not scheduled to take place pre-event is unclear, other than it was considered unsuitable.

It would seem remiss not to have considered working with the Jersey Opera House (or another venue on the island) to accommodate the chosen celebrity and promote a night of entertainment 'brought to you by the Battle of Flowers'; this has been done by the Jersey Boat Show with the Royal Marines Band. This could have raised Battle's profile, secured additional revenue and lessened the financial restrictions when choosing a celebrity representative.

### **3.12 Succession planning**

The younger generation are essential to the continued success of the Battle of Flowers, mainly due to the reliance upon volunteers to fill posts on the board and, of course, to build the floats in

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<sup>17</sup> Jackie Donald, Events Director - post event report August 2014

<sup>18</sup> Jackie Donald, Events Director - post event report August 2014

the future. There were mixed views on succession planning amongst those interviewed; the consensus is that the younger generation is less invested, and interested, in the event. Re-engaging the youth of the island through the variety of recommendations made looks likely to be a slow process.

It may be worth considering starting a youth section of the Battle that isn't directly associated with a particular parish, but perhaps the youth club and arts network, allowing them to work together as a group on a larger 'exhibit'.

#### **4.0 Conclusions:**

Whilst there are a great number of additional practical recommendations that could be made to modernise the event, there are many fundamental things that need to be considered before these could be possible, including: the categorisation of the event; the source and allocation of grant funding, sponsorship gained; and of course, physical resources and expertise.

With regard to holiday bookings, it is believed that the Battle of Flowers is no longer a significant decision maker for visitors to the island. With this in mind, it would appear to make greater sense if the event was no longer financially supported by the Economic Development Department (Jersey Tourism), but is instead moved into the remit of a cultural event for the local community; with the enhancement to the visitor experience being an additional benefit.

The consensus from those directly involved in participating in the event suggests that, as it stands, the current attitude of the committee is due in part to the long-serving members who have become resistant to change. This has resulted in a very distinct divide between those who are providing the 'exhibits' and those organising the event. There is an apparent institutionalised resistance to change at the highest level, which is ultimately restricting the opportunity for growth. This, alongside working towards mainly trying to satisfy those who have always historically attended the event, is further limiting the opportunities for change.

Reverting to the suggestions made within the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General in 2006, installing an executive director who doesn't have immediate links with the Battle of Flowers, but has an overview and understanding of its cultural significance within the island and can challenge decisions being made by the current board, is highly recommended and long overdue.

Whatever the source of future funds, serious consideration should be given to the possibility of imposing conditions on grant allocation: e.g. funds being paid directly to the parish Constables in order to regain the full participation of all 12 parishes in the event, thereby adding to the wider

community's involvement. Securing additional resources to help Battle get closer to being self-sustainable through securing sponsorship and identifying appropriate commercial opportunities is essential – the ability to achieve this sits outside the skill set of the current Board.

Alongside the suggestion to re-organise the current board, the role of the Event Director should be allowed greater autonomy; perhaps the Event Director should not sit on the Board, but report in to it. It appears that the post holder is unable to fulfill the remit of their job description due to the tight constraints currently imposed by the Board. Employed for their knowledge and expertise, they should be allowed to fulfill the role with appropriate oversight not micro-management.

A full cost benefit analysis should also be considered, in order to determine whether the investment made by government yields what is considered by all to be an agreeable return. Whilst this event remains one that has significant cultural heritage locally, it no longer has the same profile that it once had in regards to the tourism industry. Further illustrating this is a community, not tourism event.

The true cost of the event won't be possible unless a full report is undertaken to review: the loss of car parking revenue; public service costs (including those of the Transport and Technical Services department); and the impact on island employers and the Parish of St Helier etc. There seems to currently be little specific on-island commercial gain - the vast majority of infrastructure is sourced off-island and brought in at great cost. The event isn't significantly profit making and, whilst event costs remain as they do, the parade will continue to remain overly reliant on its grant funding.

The most challenging part of this report comes back to one of resources. Learning from the mistakes of the 2006 Battle, where upon the Association relied inappropriately on people who did not have the necessary skills and experience to take forward new initiatives, it is important to be sure that all recommendations will be achievable by those already involved with the Association. This is an incredibly large event with an attendance of over 10,000 on each day; in order for additional elements to be added, a variety of additional resources would need to be considered. These could remain voluntary positions, found from within the existing network and providing a much-needed link between the current Board and the exhibitors.

#### **4.1 Questions Raised:**

The process of compiling this report raised a number of important questions which fell outside the scope of the Report. These are outlined below:

1. To what extent were the recommendations made in the report written by the Comptroller & Auditor General in 2006 implemented and do they continue to be adhered to?
2. When was the governance of the Association last audited?
3. Should non-Association members be eligible for funding towards their exhibits?
4. Is the Miss Battle pageant still appropriate in modern times? Do younger people understand the significance of the role?

## 5.0 APPENDIX

### **Stakeholders Identified and Interviewed:**

#### **Tourism Shadow Board:**

John Henwood (Chairman)

Mike Graham

Sam Watts

David Seymour

Tim Crowther

Doug Bannister

Senator Alan Maclean – (previous) Minister for Economic Development Department

Mike King – Chief Officer of Economic Development Department

Peter Funk – Chairman of Tourism Development Fund

David De Carteret – Director, Jersey Tourism

Donna La Marrec – Development Manager, Jersey Tourism

Hilary Grimes - Visitor Centre Manager, Jersey Tourism

Maria da Silva - Assistant Visitor Centre Manager, Jersey Tourism

Steve Bailey – Natwest Island Games

Kevin Keen – Transition Director, Jersey Tourism

Current Board of Jersey Battle of Flowers (Events) Limited:

Chairman: Tony Perkins

Vice Chairman and Exhibitors Director: Mo Le Var

Finance Director: Kevin Keen

Events Director: Jackie Donald

Parade Director: Peter Morris

Band and Carnivals Director: Margaret Fitzgerald

Directors: Alan Eaton  
Daniel Avril  
David De Carteret  
Norman Parslow

Office Administrator: Estelle Le Brun

**Whilst most interviews were recorded for ease of reference, not all participants were happy about the files being transcribed. The notes below are those taken from a meeting that wasn't recorded.**

**The Comité des Connétables, September 15<sup>th</sup> 2014 – St Ouen Parish Hall.**

The general feedback from the Comité des Connétables was rather damning, although it was agreed that the event was a unique celebration to Jersey and one that was part of our culture and heritage. The meeting was attended by 11 of the 12 sitting Constables (the Constable of St Saviour was absent) who provided the following feedback:

**1:**

The Constable felt that: the parade is too big and out of hand now; the largest floats cost a lot to produce; it's too much money; it is going to be difficult to sustain the parade going forward and perhaps they should consider smaller floats, but less of them. There was also a suggestion that elements of the event should be free.

**2:**

The parish can no longer afford to exhibit, particularly as they don't have access to large enough premises within which they can build a seniors' float. They would very much like to enter a youth float, but are aware that this isn't currently possible in line with the existing rulebook. The Constable suggested joining forces with St Ouen and exhibiting together.

Consider: looking to the success of Alderney week; perhaps make Battle the end of a weeklong celebration; look to the Youth Arts Projects on the island for entertainment contributions, e.g. La Motte Street etc.

**3:**

The parish is concerned about succession planning, as there is a lack of interest with their younger generations. They fund their float with sponsorship, fundraising and also through the Parish rates. Their float costs around £25k. Once the float is dismantled, the flowers are given to people within the community.

They mentioned that the Young Farmers are now only able to exhibit every other year due to increased costs.

**4:**

The re election of the chairman appears to be questionable. All parishes should be able to and encouraged to participate, in order that it is a true island community event.

The parade is very short and incredibly 'samey', making the visitor experience very limited.

The Constable, at a further meeting, aired his disappointment about the parade 'taking people away from the town centre', but expressed an interest in finding ways this can be changed. Perhaps we could consider ways to link the event back in to town, whether this is through rerouting or animation within the town centre, bringing the Parish alive during the week of the Battle of Flowers. The big question is: why do they hold the parade on the avenue - is it just because it always has been? The Constable sees there is great potential to involve more of the community, perhaps by staging additional events within the town centre.

**5:**

The current Constable was responsible for initiating the parish's return to the parade after a number of years of not being involved. His view was that the floats aren't able to be seen properly, they should be somewhere they can be viewed in detail.

The parade isn't entertaining, the audience don't have any fun, there's no warm up, and the crowd aren't involved. There are no decent food outlets, these should be considered. The Constable suggested involving the Motor Club and Classic Car clubs etc. The floats are too complex and expensive and the event requires a change in the judging format.

The Battle of Flowers Board needs to challenge itself and its decisions, whilst simplifying things. The Constable questioned if the event was still even viable and feels a cap on spending should be considered.

**6:**

The Parish was unable to find a 'Miss Parish' representative this year. They complained about a lack of communication from BoF head office, which resulted in them not having enough time to advertise the position and there was also a lack of interest in the parish.

They, like St Mary, would like to enter a junior float, but not a large one. They felt the rules and regulations are far too complicated.

**7:**

Their parish committee of exhibitors is very vocal about not wanting the parade to start on the arena.

They felt the bands chosen were too noisy and the parade wasn't coordinated well this year. There is a feeling that the BoF committee doesn't listen to those exhibiting and that it is very dictatorial.

They suggested we look at the Grainville parade for direction of how the event could happen. There is a marked difference between the day and moonlight parade.

**8:**

The Constable was particularly aggrieved that this report was being produced by the 'government' and not by the Battle Board themselves. He felt that it was the Board who should be made aware of the feelings of those present.

His parish stopped entering their floats due to the rising costs. Young people aren't interested in the Battle anymore and they're even less interested in volunteering.

**9:**

Concerned about the decline of interest in the event. Battle is going down hill.

**10:**

Felt strongly that there is currently a lack of input from the BoF Board in to the parishes. Suggested that a committee member should be assigned to each parish, to act as a liaison. This year's Miss Battle competition within the parish was badly handled; they were notified of the requirements too late, etc.

The ending of the parade isn't good enough; people just get up to leave before everyone has circled the arena, which isn't pleasant for those exhibiting.

Mr. Battle was a poor choice, not good enough. A local personality should be considered, someone within the community perhaps.

It is difficult to acquire sponsorship. Everyone is concerned and things definitely need to change and improve.

**11:**

It isn't easy to see the floats. The moonlight parade is good. He would like to know how the money is allocated, as the smaller parishes don't get any funding – this all has to be raised within the community. Those who participate in the Christmas parade often use the money allocated to them for their summer float, spending as little as possible of the allocation on the Christmas float. Perhaps consider putting a size limit on the floats.

The parade is dwindling.