



**Future St. Helier Workshop**  
**Identity and community: what you said...**  
May 2015

## **Future St. Helier: identity and community**

People who engaged with the workshop were asked to address the following issue:

- *Future St Helier is a place that feels safe; that has a sense of identity and community.*

This is a just summary of what people said: it provides the context for what people identified as priorities for change.

## **What you said...**

### **A sense of community**

A clear view was expressed that St. Helier did possess a sense of community but that perhaps this was disjointed and focussed in clear clusters around the town, particularly manifest in those quarters where many of the Island's immigrant communities were located. It was recognised that community groups might be formed in response to a particular issue and then dissipate: it was acknowledged that people needed to make some effort to develop and maintain a sense of community.

The level of in-migration into St. Helier and the transient nature of its population, together with the nature of the Island's housing and immigration controls posed particular challenges to create and sustain a stronger sense of community and identity in St. Helier, as did the need for many parents to both work in order to afford the high costs of housing.

It was recognised that a sense of community and identity was influenced by hard, physical features of the environment as well as softer, more intangible elements that made a place what it was.

### **Physical environment: heritage**

There was a strong view that the physical identity and distinctiveness of St. Helier was very much created by its historic buildings and spaces: it was generally felt that more needed to be made of St. Helier's history as manifest in its historic quarters and buildings and that these should help to give somewhere a sense of place. The significance of the St. Helier markets was highlighted in this respect.

There was some concern that the town's character was being eroded by the need for higher density residential development and neighbourhoods were in danger of losing their physical charm, which would undermine their unique identity and character. There was considered to be a need for new development to better reflect the scale and character of its locality.

### **Physical environment: space to interact**

There was also a strong view that the provision of physical spaces in which to meet and to interact were an essential component of what makes a community and help to give somewhere an identity.

The need for open space, in the form of parks and gardens, was highlighted by many. It was identified that places for a community to gather could take many forms, including streets (road closures) and pavements (i.e. 'al fresco' café culture). This was strongly linked to the need for more activities and events as outline overleaf.

It was recognised that rural parishes in the Island used the parish hall or the parish primary school as a focal point of activity for the community: it was considered that access to community facilities such as these were lacking in St. Helier and that more intensive use of existing public buildings and other facilities could be made and that more communal facilities should be provided in association with development. This would enable the creation and use of such facilities as neighbourhood or community centres.

### **Physical environment: connectivity**

Better physical links between parts of town was highlighted as important to a sense of integration and identity, as well as providing better access to a wider range of facilities ('urban knitting'): these

discussions revisited the theme of giving more space to the pedestrian over the car that was highlighted in the 'travel and transport' session. The volume and speed of traffic in some parts of town was not considered conducive to developing a sense of community where major roads bisected, separated and isolated parts of the town e.g. the Waterfront.

It was proposed that St. Helier needed a better physical 'sense of arrival' that was more welcoming to help develop its identity.

There was considered to be great potential for technology to help build a sense of community digitally and that St. Helier could become a much 'smarter' and better connected place.

#### **'Soft' elements: information and awareness**

Linked to the notion of a 'smarter' place was the idea of providing greater information about what St. Helier had to offer and what was going on in it, to help foster its sense of identity and profile as the Island's capital city: town 'rangers' to provide information to tourists; touch-screen panels; and using prominent buildings to 'advertise' events and activities were some of the suggestions that emerged.

#### **'Soft' elements: vibrancy**

There was a considerable view that there was a need for more events and activities in St. Helier, particularly for children and families, to contribute to the identity and character of the town. Town needed to become an aspirational place for families; there needed to be more activities for fun and exciting opportunities for play and sport (which were free and available to children and young people). The potential contribution that Fort Regent might make to this was a recurring theme. And St. Helier had to become a safe place for families.

It was proposed that a celebration of St. Helier should be made through a series of events.

It was recognised that St. Helier's identity altered in the evening and that its night-time economy was important as part of its offer as a vibrant place. The challenges of antisocial alcohol-related behaviour were identified but it was generally considered by many that St. Helier was actually safe in the evening and that policing was good, although weekends posed particular challenges.

#### **'Soft' elements: governance**

A link was made between the governance structures within the town to manage its own affairs and its own sense of identity and community. It was proposed that St. Helier should enjoy greater autonomy to administer more regulation and expenditure and that by directly vesting powers to a local level would engender a greater sense of local identity, engagement and civic pride amongst St. Helier residents.

There was felt to be a need to develop a more 'can do' attitude and not to be overburdened by 'red tape' particularly in the administration of events and activities, as well as developing a greater tolerance amongst residents as to the value of such events and activities to the local community.

#### **Other ways to have your say**

This is a summary of the output and feedback about identity and community from the public workshop.

If you want to add to or join the debate about this aspect of Future St. Helier and the changes you would like to see happen, you can do:

- **Send us an email:** drop us a line at [futuresthelier@gov.je](mailto:futuresthelier@gov.je)
- **Twitter:** follow the conversation at @FutureStHelier

## Priorities for change

Participants at the workshop were asked if they could only make two changes about identity and community in Future St Helier what would they be: this is what they said was most important to change:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Disjointed social groups and cultures <i>(i.e. take measures to encourage better integration)</i></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop historic and cultural quarters</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduce traffic</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Power of St. Helier to regulate <i>(i.e. devolve more powers to the Parish of St. Helier to manage town affairs)</i></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rents <i>(i.e. reduce rents to encourage more neighbourhood businesses)</i></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Night-time economy <i>(i.e. better management of the night-time economy)</i></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• St. Helier to be a 'smart' and 'digital' place</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• St. Helier to be a sustainable, green town <i>(i.e. create more community open spaces and gardens)</i></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• improve facilities <i>(i.e. particularly for the youth)</i></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New development should reflect existing character</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Need to embrace change <i>(i.e. encourage greater tolerance of change, events and activities)</i></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Connectivity of areas: remove barriers <i>(i.e. improve connectivity physically and digitally)</i></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintain existing communities <i>(i.e. support existing cultural quarters)</i></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make St. Helier an aspirational place <i>(i.e. promote and market what St. Helier has to offer)</i></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Give people a say to create civic pride <i>(i.e. better community engagement)</i></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Better connectivity of places (urban knitting) <i>(i.e. better physical links between places and facilities)</i></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community neighbourhood incentives <i>(i.e. the provision or use of neighbourhood/ community centres/ facilities)</i></li></ul>

## Your top priority for change

Tell us what you think is the most important change for identity and community in Future St. Helier. Go to our online survey and vote: <http://consult.gov.je/public/fsh/fsh-com>