

STATES OF JERSEY



PROPOSED BUDGET (GOVERNMENT PLAN) 2026-2029 (P.70/2025): TWENTY- FIFTH AMENDMENT (P.70/2025 AMD.(25)) – COMMENTS

**Presented to the States on 4th December 2025
by the Council of Ministers**

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

Summary and context

The Council of Ministers does not support the proposal to allocate £600,000 of taxpayers' money per annum until 2031 for the maintenance of the Parish Churches. This represents a funding commitment of £3.6 million over this six-year period.

The Parish Churches are unquestionably part of Jersey's history and heritage. Each has its own unique story and character, and the Parish Churches are often central to community and parish life, both in location and practice. They are significant buildings historically and culturally, and remain important in the lives of many islanders today. This does not mean, however, that it is right or justified for millions of pounds of taxpayers' money to be allocated to their upkeep and maintenance. This is a duty and responsibility of parish ratepayers.

The Parish system

Fundamentally, it is the responsibility of the Parish to attend to the repair of the Parish Church, as well as the Cemetery, Presbytery, and property attaching to the Rectorate. These responsibilities are established in the customary law of the Island. In the case of *Baudains et autres v. Connétable de St. Jean* (1904) it was explained that:

"La réparation de l'Eglise incombe à la paroisse et, en cas d'insuffisance du Trésor, il doit y être supplée comme pour tout autre besoin public, au moyen du Rât Paroissial."
"The repair of the Church is the responsibility of the parish and, in case of insufficient funds, it must be supplemented as for any other public need, by means of the Parish Rate."

These responsibilities of the Parish are undertaken via the Ecclesiastical Assembly, which is Chaired by the Rector and whose membership includes Ratepayers. If ratepayers' money is required to repair or maintain the Parish Church, then there are established processes for any necessary monies to be voted for that purpose by the Parish Assembly, and this indeed already happens at present across the island.

Adopting this amendment would be to allow a significant encroachment by the Government into local Parish affairs and would serve primarily to further erode the role and purpose of the parish system. If additional money is needed to support the upkeep of the Parish Churches, then this should be managed and agreed at the Parish level. It is perfectly viable and legitimate for ratepayers to allocate such funds, including through an increase in the rate if necessary. Indeed, such an approach would be more prudent and democratic, ensuring that an individual Parish Assembly can scrutinise any proposals for additional funds in respect of their particular Parish Church, and ensure that those proposals are appropriate and satisfactory in respect of each individual parish. Allocating taxpayers money from central Government would mean that this local scrutiny over the spending of public money on the Parish Churches would be lost, which is considered by Ministers to be a detrimental move.

Allocating public funds to cover parish church repairs would require diverting resources on a scale equivalent to the entire annual grant for one of the major cultural institutions in Jersey, such as the Jersey Opera House. This would place significant additional pressure on an arts, culture and heritage budget that is already fully committed to maintaining sector stability and supporting a diverse range of organisations. Such a decision would effectively mean defunding an entire organisation, undermining the

ecosystem of heritage and cultural bodies that rely on predictable funding to deliver conservation, education, and community engagement across the Island.

The Government does not provide grant funding to religious denominations and refurbishment costs are met by these organisations themselves and by donations from their communities. For example, St Thomas' church raised over £1m during 2020 for donations towards its renovation project.

An island of diverse faith and none

Jersey is an island of diverse faith and philosophy. The island is home to members of other Christian denominations and other religions. A significant proportion of islanders hold no religious faith. The 2023 Jersey Opinions and Lifestyle Survey found that 39% of adults regarded themselves as having a religion. 49% of adults did not regard themselves as having a religion, and 11% were unsure. The survey found that, of those who reported having a religion, 93% specified 'Christian' or a denomination of Christianity. However, no further information was published to break down this figure. If taxpayers' money is to be made available to support religion and/or religious or other philosophical groups in the island, then this should be distributed fairly and proportionately. It is inequitable for the Government to allocate money solely to one Christian denomination. This is especially the case when there are already local parish structures for the allocation of public money to the established church. Ministers must have regard for the whole island. The challenges faced by the Parishes in repairing and maintaining the Parish Churches are faced equally by other religions and groups in maintaining their buildings, yet they must do so without regular recourse to public funds. Difficult decisions often need to be taken. It should be remembered that many of these churches and buildings owned by other faith and philosophical groups in the island are equally important to Jersey's history and culture as the Parish Churches, and to the everyday lives of islanders in 2025.

Conclusion

Jersey benefits from having members of so many different faiths and philosophies living in the island. Our community is enriched as a result. Faith and other groups in Jersey co-exist in friendship and harmony and often work together for the good of islanders. We are very fortunate as a community in this respect.

Ministers are not rejecting this amendment out of hostility or ingratitude, but out of a wish to respect established local democratic structures within the parishes, and to ensure that the Government is equitable in its conduct between islanders who are members of a variety of faith groups and none.

Accordingly, the Council of Ministers is unable to support this amendment.

Re-issue Note

Ministers are grateful to the Dean for providing corrections on the Council of Ministers' Comment. As a result, these Comments have been revised to remove references to (1) the 'Cornerstone' giving tool as a source of funding, as it is not accessible in the Channel Islands; and (2) references to the Diocese of Salisbury, as the Diocese does not subsidise the Deanery of Jersey. The Council of Ministers apologises for the errors.
