

We need to modernise

After speaking to politicians and Constables, it is clear to me that the parish system is outdated, inefficient, and undemocratic. It may have been suited to a time when the Island was run by horse and cart, but it no longer serves the needs of modern Jersey.

We currently maintain 12 separate parishes, each with their own Constable, Parish Hall, secretary, and administrative staff, all duplicating the same basic services such as refuse collection, road maintenance, and permits. It is clear to see that each parish employs a secretary and various staff who, in many cases, do not carry out significant workloads. These roles could be streamlined and delivered far more efficiently from a central location, such as the Government of Jersey in St Helier, supported by modern technology — including AI — to reduce paperwork, duplication, and inefficiency.

This duplication of effort wastes time, money, and resources. Islanders are effectively paying for 12 “mini-governments” to carry out tasks that should be managed centrally and professionally. The funds tied up in sustaining this structure could be redirected into services that benefit everyone — such as healthcare, housing, education, and modern policing.

The democratic case for the parish system has also collapsed. Most Constables are returned unopposed, which means Islanders are being represented by people who have never faced a genuine election. If so few people are motivated to stand for the role, it suggests Islanders no longer see value in the system itself.

Meanwhile, the honorary police — once central to parish life — are now down by more than half. That is a clear signal that Islanders no longer view the honorary system as relevant or sustainable.

For these reasons, I believe the parish system should be abolished altogether. Parish life and community spirit can and will continue without the cost and inefficiency of the current structure. Jersey needs a single, modern, democratic system of government where every elected representative has faced a contested election and every Islander has an equal voice.

This review is a vital opportunity to move away from outdated traditions and create a system that is fair, efficient, and fit for the future.

Paul Hymes