

STATES OF JERSEY



CONTINUATION OF RURAL AND MARINE SUPPORT

**Lodged au Greffe on 19th February 2026
by Deputy K.F. Morel of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity
Earliest date for debate: 24th March 2026**

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

to refer to their Act dated 7th November 2023, in which they approved the proposition entitled ‘Increase in revenue expenditure for agriculture and fisheries’ (P.74/2023), as amended, and to agree that the Council of Ministers should ensure the current level of financial support for Rural and Marine sectors in 2026, including both the Agricultural Loans Scheme and Better Business Support funding allocated directly to Rural and Marine, continues in perpetuity and increases in line with RPI(X) each year until this proposition is rescinded by the States Assembly.

DEPUTY K.F. MOREL OF ST. JOHN, ST. LAWRENCE AND TRINITY

REPORT

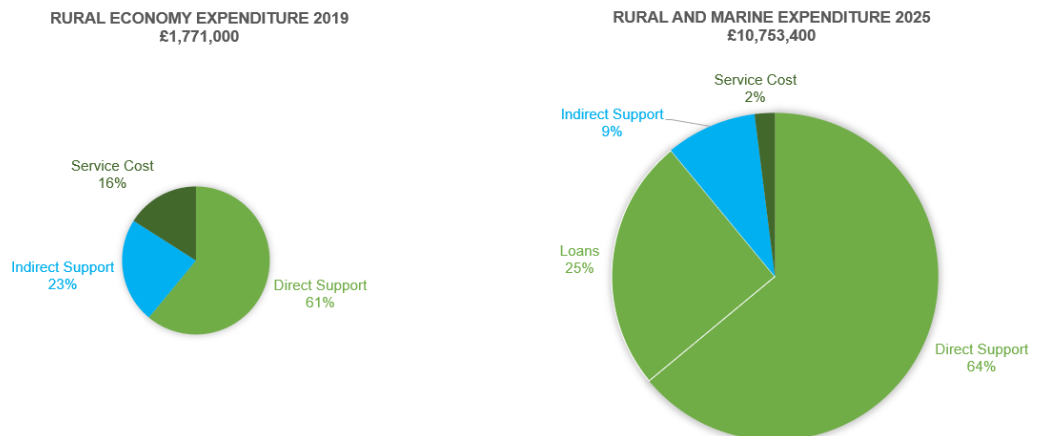
While it is not possible to lodge a proposition in the name of multiple members, I do want to be clear from the outset that I have been very grateful for the support of Deputies Tom Binet and Steve Luce in preparing this proposition. This builds on the previous Proposition P.74/2023 which was lodged by Deputy Luce and which recognised the acute challenges facing the Rural and Marine sectors and provided increased financial support and the re-introduction of Agricultural Loans. That decision represents a significant step forward in reversing a long-period of underfunding comparative to these sectors in neighbouring jurisdictions.

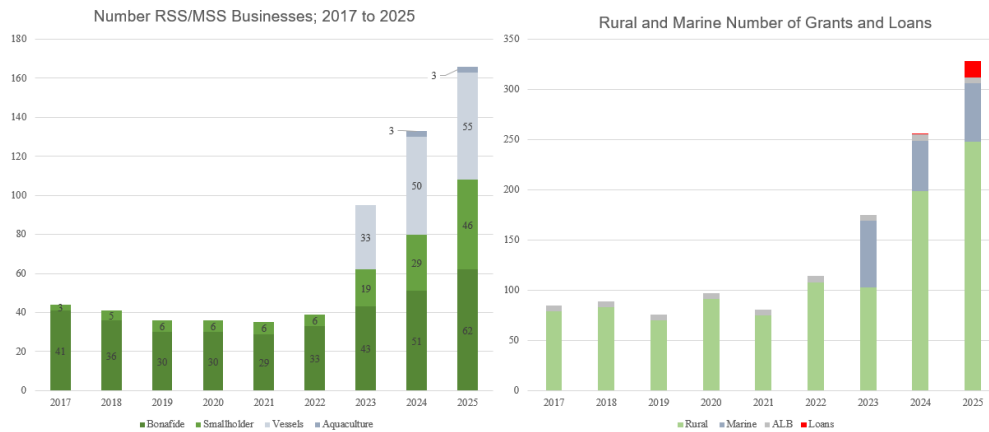
The adoption of P.74/2023 was included in the Government Plan for 2024 and has enabled increased direct financial support through the Rural and Marine grant and loan schemes. Stakeholders across the Rural and Marine sectors have consistently reported greater levels of financial certainty and an enhanced ability to invest in critical infrastructure. This mirrors the increase in numbers of support recipients since 2023, which begins to re-establish a wider Rural and Marine ecosystem after decades of decline.

Nevertheless, both sectors remain in a critical position. In the past 20 years alone, we have seen arable farm numbers decrease from over 200 to low double figures. The Jersey cow population has fallen from 198 herds in 1982 to 12 today. The fishing fleet has seen a steady decline from 328 in 1996 to 115 in 2025, of which only 10 were over 10 metres. These trends, if not addressed, risk undermining the viability of local production and export markets.

This proposition seeks to ensure that the support established under P.74/2023 and through the living wage transition continues beyond the life of the 2024 Government Plan, with annual adjustments in line with RPI(X). This will provide long-term certainty for farmers and fishers, enabling them to plan for the future and to re-invest into their businesses with confidence.

This recent progress and positive feedback stand in stark contrast to the prolonged uncertainty that characterised the period prior to 2023 which we cannot return to. It is this wider environment of investment and certainty, created through sustained and increased support, that this proposition seeks to safeguard and maintain in perpetuity.





Further indirect support includes activity by Arm’s Length Bodies such as Jersey Island Genetics Ltd, Jersey Product Promotions (2017) Ltd (part of Jersey Business of January 2026), and the Jersey Royal PR Campaign. This ensures that both the agricultural and fisheries industries benefited not only from direct financial support but also from initiatives designed to strengthen market presence, cultivate the future skills and regenerative developments, and ultimately enhance long-term sustainability of local food production.

Direct financial support remains essential to offset rising input costs. Input costs such as fuel prices remain elevated compared with 2020 levels, fertiliser costs nearly trebled since 2021, and wage costs have risen substantially as a result of minimum wage reforms.

The Agricultural Loans scheme re-introduced under P.74/2023 has provided access to capital for investment, modernisation, and sustainability. In 2025, 9 applications were formally recommended for approval by the Agricultural Loans Fund Board, representing a total of more than £4 million in loans that are either completed or currently being processed. The continuation of this scheme is of strategic importance, as it provides farmers with access to affordable capital for long-term investment in infrastructure, technology, and sustainability. There are advanced legislative updates to be brought to the Assembly to enable Marine businesses to apply to the Loans fund. This will enable businesses to modernise and adapt to changing market and environmental conditions, and strengthens the resilience of the Rural and Marine sectors which in turn supports their capacity to contribute to Jersey’s economy and food security well into the future.

These support mechanisms are essential to the ambition of reducing Jersey’s reliance on importation which is approximately 90% of current food supply. Alongside the opportunity to increase local spend on locally produced food, this ambition could help protect Jersey against fluctuations in international food supply chain costs.

The transition to a living wage is a positive development for Jersey’s workforce, but it presents acute challenges for agriculture, where a high proportion of employees are at or near the minimum wage. This resulted in Government committing £1.1m additional support in both 2025 and 2026 to mitigate wage increases which were delivered via the Rural and Marine Support Schemes. The minimum wage costs incurred by the industries will not disappear after 2026 and so must be maintained.

Beyond financial measures, the industries provide wider public goods. Farmers maintain hedgerows, manage landscapes, and contribute to the Island's cultural identity through products such as the Jersey Royal and the Jersey cow. The fishing fleet, while facing pressures from fuel costs, wage levels, Brexit-related trade barriers, and climate change, continues to supply local seafood and sustains maritime traditions.

Whether in farming or fishing, the absence of certainty in government support has been a persistent challenge. Long-term investment decisions cannot be made without confidence in future policy. This proposition seeks to provide that assurance by embedding support in perpetuity, indexed to RPI(X), and by continuing the Agricultural Loans scheme established under P.74/2023.

In return for this support, Jersey benefits from reduced food miles, enhanced food security, the availability of Genuine Jersey products, contributions to culture and heritage, and direct fiscal returns. The proposition is therefore not simply a matter of financial assistance but of securing the long-term sustainability of two industries that remain integral to Jersey's economy and identity.

Deputy Kirsten Morel

Deputy Steve Luce

Deputy Tom Binet

Financial and staffing implications

The core Rural and Marine budget has been allocated RPI(X) uplifts for each year of the current Budget however RPI(X) increases beyond 2029 will need to be found within future Government budgets. This will be minor in the grand scheme of other budget pressures and can be forecasted ahead of time.

The extension of the Better Business Support Package funding for the rural and marine sectors is valued at £1.1m and this will need to be found for 2027 and beyond, also increasing with RPI(X). This will necessitate either the inclusion either of a bid within the forthcoming Budget/ Government Plan or, a re-allocation of existing departmental spend but this decision will be up to the incoming Council of Ministers.

There are no identifiable additional staffing costs, as the funding schemes in question would not change, just the amounts provided to our agricultural and fishing communities.

Children's Rights Impact Assessment

I consider that this proposition has no direct or indirect impact on children and that the duty to have due regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child does not arise. Accordingly, a Children's Rights Impact Assessment is not required under the Children (Convention Rights) (Jersey) Law 2022 .