

# STATES OF JERSEY



## STATUTORY DUTY TO FUTURE GENERATIONS

---

**Lodged au Greffe on 19th February 2026  
by Deputy K.M. Wilson of St. Clement  
Earliest date for debate: 24th March 2026**

---

**STATES GREFFE**

## **PROPOSITION**

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

that it should be a statutory duty of the Council of Ministers to consider the impact of policy making and law drafting on future generations and to request the Chief Minister to undertake all necessary actions to implement a law setting out the Government’s “Duty to Future Generations”, such Law to have regard to –

- (a) avoiding decisions that create unsustainable debt burdens on future generations so they can sustain economic well-being and prudent management of the Island's finances;
- (b) preserving, and protecting the natural environment from irreversible damage to enable future generations’ enjoyment of the Island and its surroundings;
- (c) reinvigorating the Island economy to prevent future generations experiencing economic and social decline in our communities;
- (d) protecting the Island’s identity and its assets for future generations and strengthening community cohesion and resilience; and
- (e) ensuring policy decisions and laws actively strengthen the ability of future generations to adapt to the pace of economic, technological, environmental and social change over time.

DEPUTY K.M. WILSON OF ST. CLEMENT

## REPORT

I am bringing forward this proposition because there is mounting evidence which shows that some policy decisions being taken now are potentially stacking up financial, societal, and economic problems for future generations to deal with. I believe this is placing an unfair burden on the Island's future generations and that the Assembly and the Council of Ministers have a responsibility to plan for and enable future generations to flourish and thrive in the longer term as well as now.

“The Future” is coming faster than we think and the decisions made now will determine the conditions under which future generations in this Island will live. This responsibility places a clear responsibility on Assembly members to ensure that we act with foresight and with care.

One aspect of “the future” is the accelerated development in science and technology which will profoundly shape how Islanders live in the future. When this change is set against an ageing demography, global political uncertainty and social conditions affecting economic mobility and aspiration these dimensions present a way of life and set of expectations different to how we live now. It also raises serious questions about how we form and advance policy choices and decisions which not only meet the needs of Islanders now but also future generations.

Ministers have been criticised in some quarters for policies considered to be “short term” but with long term consequences. Take for example the Fiscal Policy Panels comments on the risks to public finances and the impact of an ageing population on the tax base, or the Comptroller and Auditor General comments on the absence of a primary care strategy and the impact on the liquidity of the Health Insurance Fund or more generally the views and concerns of political observers in the Island commenting on the contradictions between strategic intention and policy decisions in areas of the economy, social security, infrastructure, housing, health and education. The message seems to be loud and clear: we are not looking ahead and planning sufficiently well enough to enable future generations on the Island to thrive and flourish - something needs to change.

How does the Assembly assure itself that the needs of future generations are formally considered when making policy decisions and laws? Is the Assembly sufficiently concerned with the fact that creating a vision for the future is just as important as managing the transaction of daily governance activity? Is it comfortable knowing that some of the decisions made today may actually create a problem for tomorrow? How does this fit with the Assembly's responsibility to be accountable to the public? Can it deliver assurances from its current processes that deliver the kind of assurance islanders are looking for? Is the Council of Ministers sufficiently preparing for “future” scenarios or just concerned with getting policy ideas approved and implemented irrespective of the longer-term consequences? Have Ministers and Members of the Assembly considered what Islanders might demand from politicians in the future to help them live their lives fully in this changing world or prepared to leave that to others nearer the time?

While some politicians may claim they offer a longer-term view in their policy work, as a general observation finding reliable evidence to support the fact that a systematic impact assessment of a policy on future generations has taken place is difficult to find.

My proposition is seeking to establish a statutory “duty to future generations” which is placed on Ministers when developing policy and laws to ensure they plan, measure, record and account for the impact of decisions being taken and that this is made public.

Current political decision making and legislative activity is primarily focused on addressing short to medium term needs consistent with the rules underpinning Public Finance Law and the Bridging Island Plan. The only “impact assessment” under these arrangements engaged to assist the Assembly with decision making is CRIA and focused on the impact on children. My proposal attempts to go further by placing a statutory duty on Ministers to assess and measure longer term impacts of policy development and law making on future generations not just children and by making this a critical element of the Island’s planning processes

This proposal will require cultural change and different thinking if the Assembly accepts that the quality of foresight is fundamental to preparing future generations for scenarios where life as we know it now, is characterised differently in the future. It is our responsibility to ensure that decisions we take today take account of the impacts of scientific and technological development on our children and our children’s children and to plan in ways that enable future generations to enjoy, protect and enhance Island life.

#### **Financial and staffing implications**

Financial and staffing implications will be limited to the requirements for legislative drafting and policy time. For the ongoing actions arising from the new legislation, it is considered that this would fall within available resources as this proposition seeks to ensure Members and Policy makers take greater account of various factors, which would be part of an overall change in approach rather than in addition to existing actions.

#### **Children’s Rights Impact Assessment**

A Children’s Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) has been prepared in relation to this proposition and is available to read on the States Assembly website.