

25<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Deputy St Pier

### **Overseas Aid & Development Commission – Coronavirus Response**

The response to the current Coronavirus pandemic places extraordinary demands on all of us as a community. The Commissioners and I recognise that the Overseas Aid & Development Commission cannot stand apart from this.

Already, at the request of the Policy & Resources Committee, the Commission's Secretary and Principal Officer have been asked to provide direct support to the States of Guernsey's coronavirus response. They do so with our blessing and our support.

We have considered how we can scale back our planned business in order to release their time. Charities who applied for a grant last year, who still have the final elements of their due diligence to submit, have been advised that we will process these as and when we can. We have suspended the new Large Grants programme, which we opened earlier this spring; and we do not expect to launch a Small Grants programme in the normal way, later this summer.

We are also asking the charities we work with whether worldwide restrictions, in response to the pandemic, will affect their ability to deliver planned work.

We anticipate that this will mean that much of the Commission's budget for 2020 (at least £1million) will remain unspent during this year. In light of the exceptional financial commitment which the States has had to make in the last few days, we believe the responsible thing to do is to offer to return this to the Treasury at once, to support the Island's coronavirus response.

While it is a matter for the Policy & Resources Committee to decide how those funds should be reallocated, the Commissioners would be pleased if a proportion could be used to supplement the new Hardship Fund. This kind of support, directly to our community, would reflect the spirit of our mission.

We believe it is important that the Commission should retain its normal approach to Emergency Relief (using our current allocated budget of £350,000) throughout 2020: not least, because there is a need for a global, as well as a local, response to the coronavirus pandemic. While the scale of the coronavirus risk in most developing countries is, as yet, unclear, and the Commission is therefore not considering emergency relief applications linked to the pandemic for the time being, it is clear that, where the virus is spreading in countries

with much weaker health systems and much weaker governance than ours, the risks may prove to be far greater. Similarly, there is every chance of another natural disaster, health crisis or conflict affecting the communities we serve, while the world is still reeling from coronavirus. If there are not still resources in place to respond to those needs, the human misery and suffering will be profound.

In the long term, as we and the world begin to recover from coronavirus, we trust the Policy & Resources Committee will agree that Guernsey will need to maintain a commitment to Overseas Aid that is proportionate to our resources.

We have learnt, now more than ever, that we are a connected world – we are all in this together, and we have a responsibility towards each other's health, wellbeing, and survival. The communities we exist to serve will struggle most to build back from the social and economic devastation of the virus. The work we do around health, hygiene, education and economic security is the foundation of a stronger future, where risks like the ones we face today are minimised.

Yours sincerely

(SIGNED)

Deputy E. McSwiggan  
President, Overseas Aid & Development Commission