



Paul Welch: Five things I'd change about Guernsey

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As the founder and CEO of a company which helps enable others to buy their homes, Paul Welch is passionate about helping people in Guernsey.

The man behind largemortgageloans.com and millionplus.com recently returned to the island with his wife and two daughters, and we asked him for the five things he would change about Guernsey:

1. Provide more support to older people

Our ageing population is a ticking time bomb. The number of people aged 60 and over in Guernsey is projected to double between 2009 and 2039 and in the last five years alone, the number of islanders aged between 65 and 84 has increased by 11%. This ageing population needs support from the States, but it also needs private companies to provide the right products and services so that they can support themselves.

By staying in their own homes and out of the States system, older people can continue to put money into the economy. That was my thinking behind introducing the Family Building Society to the island last year. We now have a lender who can provide mortgages to islanders up to the age of 89 for the first time. We're bringing their team over next week (Wednesday, 27 June) to speak to the 65+ population about later life lending and I'd encourage anyone with queries to come along to find out more about their options:

[Guernseylaterlifelending.eventbrite.co.uk](https://www.guernseylaterlifelending.eventbrite.co.uk)



2. Use the island as a test bed

There are a myriad of opportunities here. Guernsey is its own jurisdiction with a captive and responsive audience, and we have so much to offer. Why aren't we in contact with Google offering the island as a test bed for driverless cars? Why can't we test drone taxis here, servicing Herm, Sark and Alderney? If we want to set up a Guernsey University, why are we only looking to the traditional institutions? How about talking to Apple, Google and the likes of individuals such as Elon Musk and James Dyson?

There's a huge amount of potential to make the island a centre of excellence for technology and creativity, a hot spot for innovation and a test bed for all manner of exciting and forward-thinking ideas, products and services. We just need to open our minds to these opportunities.



3. Captivate cruise passengers

Over 110,000 cruise ship passengers visited Guernsey in 2017, adding just over £4 million to the economy. But passenger numbers were down by 20,000 because 15 ships couldn't dock. That lost the island hundreds of thousands of pounds. Just think what we could do if we built a deep water cruise liner terminal.

We could take passengers into St Sampson's and boost a part of the island which desperately needs an injection of capital. More passengers docking would mean more confidence in the tourism industry and open doors to the creation of new attractions and experiences. The whole Bailiwick could benefit; the cruise terminal could also house ports for boats and ribs going off to visit Sark, Herm and Alderney. People expect 'the Disney experience' when they're on holiday, and with the right thinking and investment, we can give it to them.



4. Connectivity

I would imagine 99.9% of the population of Guernsey would agree with me in highlighting connectivity to the island as something I would change. The States need to admit that running an airline isn't working. Why can't we instead lease Gatwick and Manchester slots to EasyJet or another low cost carrier and keep Aurigny running purely for lifeline routes to Alderney, France and Jersey? Then it would run at a loss, but we wouldn't be passing that loss on to islanders by charging extortionate amounts on popular and viable UK links.

Instead of ever increasing prices, islanders should be rewarded for their loyalty. Why can't we buy five or ten flights at a fixed cost upfront at the start of the year? That would offer financial certainty for Aurigny and lower cost flights.



5. Change

I know this is supposed to be '5 things I'd change...' but I think that the topic of change generally needs to be something Guernsey gets much better at.

Our laws around lending date back to 1955. This is something I'm seeking to change with our recent campaign to abolish bond registration fees. Why aren't we creating a best in class system for dealing with our waste? Why don't we consider giving our children a head start and teach languages such as Mandarin? Most islanders – myself included - have never known a day of unemployment in two generations. Guernsey is an incredible place to live and to raise children, but decision makers need to be more forward thinking. The finance industry won't be able to support us for ever.

We need to evolve; market Guernsey like a business and run it with a responsive and decisive executive board. We need to make the world aware that we are flexible and open for business.

Otherwise, we will be left behind to the detriment of future generations.



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