

The Chief Pleas Government of Sark

The Colin Kniveton Papers

Produced by the Chief Secretary during his
period of consultancy

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Review of issues relating to
the undertaking of
a Census in Sark

A document for consideration, consultation,
discussion and comment

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Review of Issues

Relating to Undertaking of a Census in Sark

Introduction

Following a request from the General Purposes and Advisory Committee, a review of the advantages and consequences of holding a regular Census programme for Sark has been undertaken.

Considerations arising from research into the manner in which the holding and management of statistical information are linked to this project, as are the variances between the approaches adopted across the Bailiwick of Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man.

Why Hold a Census?

The census will provide information on the size and characteristics of the population of Sark. It would represent Sark's single largest statistics gathering exercise. The figures will assist Chief Pleas to shape everyone's future as the basis for effective public services for the next decade. The census is used to provide a count of the population of Sark at a point in time. And should record the basic population characteristics such as age, gender and tenure of residents who live in Sark.

This information is vital to help Chief Pleas prioritise policies, allocate resources and plan services according to the needs of Sark. Services which rely on census data for future planning include:

- health services
- housing
- education
- employment
- transport services

Who uses the statistics?

Census statistics can provide valuable information for government and private organisations as well as the general public. For example:

- government departments rely on accurate population data in order to plan and develop public services
- the age structure of the population is important for planning and prioritising health and social services requirements

- schools need to plan for the future using accurate data on numbers of infants
- businesses use population data in order to define the local market and labour force
- census information is normally publicly available in aggregate (grouped) form. Genealogists and family members use 100 year old census data to explore family histories.

Alternative Approaches

Bailiwick of Guernsey (excluding Sark)

As a result of a need to review budgets in the light of current economic circumstances, States of Guernsey took a decision to replace the traditional census with a rolling electronic census with the Guernsey Annual Population Bulletin. Under this new system, Guernsey and Alderney (and also Herm, Jethou and Lihou) census data is collected from States of Guernsey IT systems (Social Security, Income Tax, Education, Housing etc.) via a new method. Following the States decision (see *Billet d'Etat XVII, 2010*, available via www.gov.gg/billets), a census was not held in Guernsey in 2011. The Policy and Research Unit are instead working on further developing an electronic alternative, which will utilise existing administrative sources. The intention is to expand upon the information already published in the Guernsey Annual Population Bulletin in order to provide more of the information traditionally collected via a census, such as population by parish.

As a result of this decision, people will not be asked to provide any additional information by means of a traditional census exercise, but electronic data already provided to separate departments will be centrally collated.

In order to satisfy Data Protection Law requirements, this practice will be allowable when a revised Census Ordinance has been enacted (the States are to be asked to approve the drafting of the Ordinance in March).

Although the States of Alderney agreed to abandon the traditional census operation, the issue polarized opinion at the time and was heavily influenced by Guernsey's decision to progress down the electronic route. Alderney's census was heavily subsidized by Guernsey and the decision to follow the Guernsey route was made with costs in mind. However, several States Members and the Chamber of Commerce argued that it was 'risky' to abandon the tried and tested formula of census in favour of the radically different 'data capture and periodic sample surveys' system at the heart of its replacement – especially at a time when Alderney found itself in such a precarious financial position.

It should be noted that the recently produced "Alderney Economic Strategy Plan" relies on data extrapolated from electronic sources for the period 2001-11 (i.e. since the previous

“conventional” census was held), so it must be concluded that the information is sufficiently robust to form the basis for decisions relating to future economic strategies.

Jersey

Jersey has maintained the traditional approach to the production of a census, the latest being held in March 2011, on the same date as the census held in England , Scotland and Wales and Northern Ireland. The census is held under the auspices of the **Census (Jersey) Law, 1951**, (as amended).

The Statistics Unit ran the Jersey Census independently, on behalf of the Chief Minister. The entire census project was carried out locally, including processing and validation of the census returns. This approach allowed use of local knowledge and expertise throughout the census project.

- the Island was divided into 166 Enumeration districts, with a fieldworker (Enumerator) responsible for checking that all dwellings in their district were included in our address list;
- census Enumerators hand-delivered census questionnaires to every household in Jersey;
- each household was required to complete and return the questionnaire, providing details of all those who were usually resident along with any visitors at the household on census night;
- households who did not return their census form were sent a reminder and replacement questionnaire before being visited by a special team of Collection Officers, multiple times where required. The follow-up of non-responding households continued for several months;
- the census office checked and processed census questionnaires from all the households and communal establishments across the Island;
- a careful process of validation was carried out against administrative data sources to ensure the final census numbers were consistent with the known sections of the population.

In deciding which topics to cover, the Statistics Unit consulted with States Members and officers in Jersey, as well as professional statisticians in the UK, and researched plans for censuses in other countries.

The cases made for specific topics by census users were balanced against the public acceptability of the questions, whether or not they can be asked in a way that gives reliable information, and whether there are alternative methods of collecting the information.

The questions to be asked in 2011 were approved by of the States of Jersey Assembly in

September 2010. The number of questions were kept to a minimum to ensure that the questionnaire was quick and easy to fill in.

At a cost of some £500,000 per census, the decision to abandon a five year interim census is understandable although some of the savings were invested in developing other statistical information gathering systems, in the same manner as Guernsey.

Isle of Man

The Isle of Man has retained the most traditional approach to the census process, holding a full census every 10 years with an interim census in between, under the authority of the Census Act 1929.

The system is extremely similar to that described for Jersey, with paid temporary staff employed to distribute and collect the relevant forms to prescribed areas. The following definitions relate to the headings used in the Census tables and to concepts underlying the Census analysis:

Population Base

The primary purpose of taking a Census is to gather information on the Island's resident population. To facilitate historical comparisons it is traditional to also examine the figure for the Census population as shown in the historical data section of this report. There is also the de facto population, defined as the number of people actually in the Island on Census night. The following are the various population definitions used in this report:

Resident Population: Isle of Man residents present on Census Night plus residents absent from the Island on Census Night.

Census Population: Resident population plus visitors in the Island on Census Night.

De Facto Population: Residents present on Census Night plus visitors in the Island on Census Night

Visitors

For Census purposes a visitor is defined as a person whose usual place of residence is outside the Isle of Man. This includes persons who are visiting the Island on holiday and those on business who are here to work for a temporary period but who do not intend to take up residence in the Island in the immediate future.

Resident Households

A household comprises of either one person living alone or a group of persons (who may or may not be related) living at the same address with common housekeeping which includes, for example, sharing one meal a day together. The statistics presented on resident households exclude persons in communal establishments. The total number of such persons in 2006 is 1,579.

Census Districts/Enumeration Districts

Each of the Island's 24 towns, villages and parishes comprises a census district. An enumeration district covers the area of work of a particular enumerator. Heavily populated areas will therefore contain many enumeration districts (Douglas has 38).

Dependency Ratio

The dependency ratio is the number of people under 16 years old and the number of retirement age as a percentage of the working age population. Those of retirement age are taken to be all women 60 years and older and all men 65 years and older. The working age group consists of all adults above the age of 15 and under the age of 60 for women and 65 for men.

Employed/Economically Active

Statistics on the employed population refer to the number of those in the resident population employed at the time of the census. The economically active population is comprised of the employed population and the unemployed who are looking for work or waiting to start work already obtained.

Occupation

Information on employment by occupation relates to the main occupation of persons in employment or self-employment. The person's description of the tasks undertaken in their occupation was used to assign him/her to an occupational group.

Industry

As with occupation, information on employment by industry relates to the main occupation of persons in employment or self-employment. The person's description of their employer's business is used to assign him/her to an industrial sector. As a result, a degree of judgement is built into the process of allocating individuals to

industries and this should be borne in mind when interpreting results, particularly if making inter-censal comparisons.

A sample of an interim census form as used by the Isle of Man in 2006 is available.

The Current Situation

Fortunately, and principally through the efforts of Mrs Jane Norwich, on behalf of La Societe Sercquaise, a significant amount has been done, albeit on an informal basis, to commence the collection of some aspects of data that would be expected from a census exercise.

In February 2012, a visual survey was undertaken of properties in Sark which yielded data as set out in **Appendix 1**. This information provides a sound base for further work to take place, although further refinement of the information gathering techniques and their application will be required.

For example, the data is based upon local knowledge of buildings and their inhabitants. As such, there is a potential for error due to information not being substantiated or omitted. There is also further scope to more clearly define the information obtained, in order to ensure a consistency of understanding. A reference to the definitions used in the Isle of Man census would largely resolve this issue.

A more pressing issue relates to legal concerns with regard to data protection and the manner in which the information collected is utilised. In Guernsey, each Department has at least one separate IT system designed for the purposes of administering the relevant pieces of legislation e.g. social security and housing licensing are totally separate. Currently, every Department has a specific reason for collecting the information from people in the first place i.e. administering the relevant legislation. Similarly, there would need to be confirmation that a legal basis for collecting information from people in Sark, whether it be for a census, work permits or other possible uses, exists. In Guernsey, due to the constraints of the data protection law, further legislation (the Rolling Electronic Census ordinance) is required to enable data that is collected for other, specific purposes, to be used for census purposes, if it was not originally collected for that purpose.

The other legal issue that should be discussed relates to the authority that might be vested in Chief Pleas to compel citizens to complete the census forms. All the other Crown Dependencies have legislation that is designed to ensure that there is no ability to “opt out” of the census process. Consideration will need to be given as to whether it is considered necessary in Sark to pass similar legislation. On the one hand, it would be hoped that the overwhelming majority of people required to complete the census would do so voluntarily. On the other hand, the non-completion by a relatively small number of individuals or households would reduce the effectiveness of the exercise.

With regards to I.T. systems, the availability of Digi Map will enhance the administrative burden created by a census in a variety of ways. The charting of all buildings (occupied, non-occupied, inhabitable or non-inhabitable) provides an excellent reference against which to record responses and it is understood that the system can be programmed to produce mailings to all addresses entered onto the system and cross-referenced to the mapping system.

It is apparent from a very cursory examination that Digi Map is an extremely powerful tool that could be utilised by various Committees to assist with a variety of tasks. For example, a list of individuals residing at addresses that could be geographically identified combined with supplementary information would be of value to law enforcement agencies, work permit inspectors and compilers of voting lists. The benefits arising from the effective management of Digi Map will increase as its functionality is exploited, over and above the current uses to which it currently provides. This will require careful monitoring to ensure confidentiality and security of data is maintained.

With regards to the Project Manager role, Mrs Norwich has volunteered to undertake this post and manage all aspects of the work involved on behalf of the Committee.

Conclusion and Recommendations

There are many advantages that arise from a knowledge of the numbers, identities and associated information in respect of the population that can be compiled as a result of a regular and simple census. The number of questions can be tailored to suit the immediate needs of Chief Pleas and will mainly be used to assist in making decisions or assessing the impact of such decisions on the economy.

While any census cannot be regarded as being totally accurate, the fact that a census is being conducted will provide reassurance to other Crown Dependencies and external law agencies that Sark is taking steps to regulate its activities.

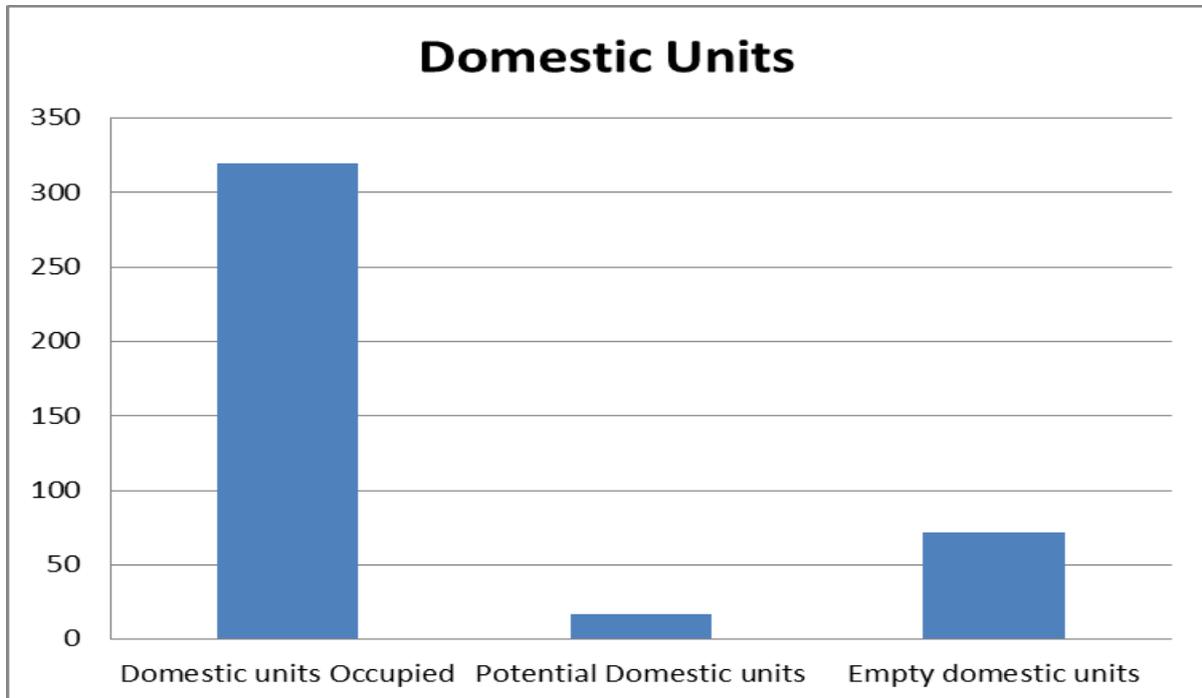
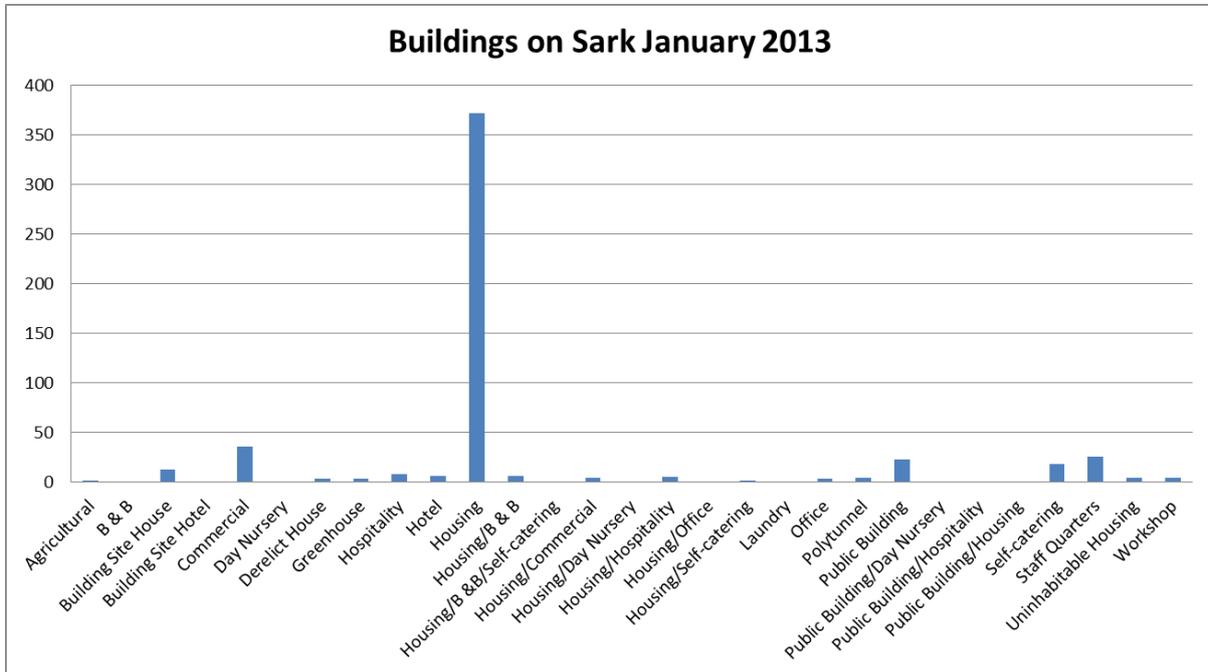
It is possible that some residents will see such an exercise as being unnecessary or intrusive. However, there are occasions when such reservations have to be set aside, for a wider benefit and it is suggested that the introduction of a regular census should be regarded in such a manner. With regards to the introduction of the necessary legislation, a simple Bill extending powers available elsewhere in the Bailiwick should present few difficulties.

Given the scale of the exercise, the availability of resources to both manage the project and to use an existing software system, costs can be minimised. On this basis, it is recommended that the Committee agrees in principle to the holding of a regular census and that Mrs Jane Norwich be co-opted onto the Committee to prepare a draft of the census form, review administrative and legislative requirements and advise the Committee as to the estimated budget.

Appendix 1

Summary of Data Collected

By Mrs Jane Norwich, February 2012



Occupants of domestic dwellings

