

## EDUCATION

Academic excellence on tap for local and other students is the ethos behind the Guernsey university initiative, its executive project director has said. Susan Jackson told **Kay Leslie** why the project will have 'many positives' for Guernsey and how it will work in the context of small-island life

**G**OOD progress is being made with plans to establish the University of the Channel Islands in Guernsey, executive project director Susan Jackson has said.

The main drive in creating it is a determination to provide islanders and overseas students with academic excellence, she added.

The international education consultant expects that the new facility is on target for launch in September 2015 and said the project will be good news for the economy as well as those wanting to stay here for tertiary education. The university would offer competitive rates to Guernsey students.

'There are many positives about using the island for this new university and we are already receiving inquiries from as far afield as the Far East and from North America. Guernsey is ideally located, with good transport links, a safe environment and a stable economy. It all combines to present an unusually high number of positives for developing a university here,' she said.

Her role as a global educationalist regularly involves her in identifying countries and locations that offer potential for this type of project: 'We work with governments, sponsors and educational organisations with the aim of making a real difference to the quality of education available to young people.' Projects have included public and private sector initiatives with budgets of up to £40m. The plan is that the comparatively small local project initially would gradually increase from a small start-up group of students to a maximum of 2,000 local and visiting students within a decade.

Several potential sites have been identified and Susan said that 'every effort' is being made to ensure that the university would have a minimum impact on sensitive aspects of island life, such as housing and tourism.

'We are in discussion with relevant groups to see how we can implement the scheme within existing frameworks. The visitor economy will not be affected because term times will run at the least busy times of the tourist season.' She pointed out that the university's focus



Within a decade of starting up, the new facility could cater to up to 2,000 local and visiting students. (Shutterstock image)

# Planners 'aiming high' for Guernsey university

would be to 'start small' and develop gradually.

Explaining how the island's housing laws can be accommodated, she said that around 80% of the academic staff will be flown in on a weekly basis for two to four days a week during term time. 'They will come from all over the world. In this way, we can select the very best international academics and we have budgeted for this.' She pointed out that the concept of 'mobile' global professors and lecturers is used elsewhere very successfully: 'One renowned example is the University of Reykjavik in Iceland.'

The University of the Channel Islands in Guernsey (UCIG) initially will have three schools – Humanities, Sciences and Education – offering a range of undergraduate and post-graduate courses.

She said that many of the degree courses had been chosen 'because they play to

Guernsey's existing strengths'. They would equip local graduates with skills that are in demand and meet gaps in current provision. 'The courses will also accommodate some of the excess demand from over-subscribed courses in the UK such as computer science and sports science.'

Included in the School of Humanities would be modern languages, politics and government, law (including Guernsey law), finance, accountancy and philosophy. The possibility of a marine science course, based in Alderney, is also being strongly investigated.

Susan said that 'the Graduate School of Education will also offer a groundbreaking course for teachers who wish to work in international schools, and there will be courses for those specialising in special educational needs teaching, which will build on the island's superior facilities in this area.'

The feasibility of opening a medical school, which was not planned for initially, has been prompted by an approach from a very distinguished potential partner.

University fees would be set 'below those charged by the Russell Group universities such as Bristol, UCL and Warwick,' she said.

**T**he organisation plans to make UCIG attractive to undergraduates and post graduates. 'Part of our thinking is to encourage Guernsey people who've studied for their first degrees off-island to return home to pursue post-graduate study. But the range of subjects we're proposing, together with the competitive fees, might encourage Guernsey school-leavers to stay put, especially if they're studying courses which give them the chance to spend a semester elsewhere in the world at one of our international partner institutions.'

The facility will not award its own degrees in the early years but, she said, 'once the university is sufficiently well established' an application would be made to the Privy Council for the University of the Channel Islands in Guernsey to be granted a Royal Charter

## THE VISION

**IN 10 years' time the project has been estimated to be worth £55m. a year at today's prices, plus any increase for the construction industry in the building and renovation of premises and accommodation.**

**The plan is to have about 180 academics teaching here, with around 35 permanently based in the island and the remainder flown in on a regular basis.**

**By then the university should be employing approximately 100 local people in non-academic appointments.**

**It is expected that 55% of students will come from the UK, the EU and the EEA, 20% from the Channel Islands and 25% from the rest of the world, particularly from the Far East, Australasia, the Indian sub-continent and the Americas.**

**The university would work closely with other top educational institutions in the UK, Europe and the Far East.**

so that it can award its own degrees. 'The university will always ensure that it does not duplicate any courses already on offer in Guernsey.'

The practicalities of operating here are under close scrutiny. 'Clearly, space on Guernsey is at a premium. We do not expect the university to reach maximum capacity of 2,000 students until 2025 and at that point we would need around 17,000 square metres of teaching and administrative accommodation.'

She reiterated that planners are 'aiming high' to provide a centre of excellence. It is estimated that the Guernsey GDP would be boosted by around £130m. per annum once the university was running at full capacity, combined with the extra demand for airline and ferry seats, a boost for local business, jobs for locals, 'Plus an influx of bright, vibrant young people.'

## WHO'S WHO

**SUSAN JACKSON (PICTURED)** is an MA with more than 30 years' experience in education. She was a teacher, administrator and three times school principal (UK, Argentina and France) before establishing her consultancy. A UK Ofsted Inspector of Schools, she was selected by the British Cabinet Office for appointment to public bodies and by the Department of Education for service on public bodies.

She has been a research fellow at the University of Bristol and was chosen to lead the Independent Schools' Initiative at the National Development Centre for Educational Management and Policy and is also a governor of a London academy and of a girls' independent school in Harrogate. She sits on the management committee of Caius House, the charitable mission established by Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge University.



Proposed vice-chancellor, **PROFESSOR JACK MCDONALD** is an historian and theologian who took a doctorate from the University of Strasbourg and followed this with the French Government's qualification for university teachers. From 1999 to 2006, he was Fellow and Dean of Gonville and Caius College Cambridge, which in Cambridge University terms means a combination of academic, committee and pastoral roles. He was also Senior Proctor of the University of Cambridge from 2002 to 2003 (and a Proctor from 2001 to 2004), giving him observer status on the University Council, membership of the University Security Committee and membership of the University Board of Scrutiny, which prepares an annual report on the decisions of the University Council.

'He has vision, huge energy and is a bilingual academic with an unusual breadth of university experience. His knowledge of education at the chalk-face is deep and varied and we are delighted to have secured his involvement,' Susan Jackson said.