

NEWS

Shop workers need time off to be with their families, say the clergy

Church leaders lobby to keep Island Sundays special

by Harry McRandle

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ISLAND churches have expressed united opposition to plans to allow unrestricted Sunday opening of shops.

An 18-month trial which would allow larger shops to open on Sundays has been proposed, but the leaders of eight churches have now launched a late attempt to try to persuade the States to reject the move, describing it as a 'grave mistake'.

The church leaders behind the action include the Dean of Jersey, the Very Rev Bob Key, the head of the Catholic Church, Monsignor Nicholas France, Methodist Superintendent the Rev Graeme Halls and John Stewart-Jones from the Freedom Church.

They have written a joint letter to the JEP to express their concern and say: 'Let's celebrate our distinct Island way of life and keep Sunday special.'

The letter expresses their 'profound reservations' about making Sunday the same as any other day and highlights the absence of legal protection for those who choose not to work. They argue that shop workers should



Methodist Superintendent the Rev Graeme Halls, Monsignor Nicholas France and the Very Rev Bob Key are opposed to the Economic Development Minister's proposal to allow all shops to open on Sundays

be able to spend Sundays with their families and that giving staff another day off during the week is 'small

consolation', as they will be unable to spend time with children at school and with friends who are working.

'We believe it's vitally important that as far as is reasonable, we all get shared time off,' say the Church leaders.

Their letter goes on to say: 'We believe that Sunday is a great gift of God to all of us so that we can enjoy a day of peace, relaxation and quality time with family and friends.'

'To change it so that it is indistinguishable from every other day would, we believe, be a grave mistake which could alter an important part of our Island life irreversibly and be to the great detriment of the lifestyles of many Islanders.'

The leaders say that unre-

stricted Sunday trading is likely to mean that some of the lowest paid workers in society could be coerced into working against their will.

They claim that the impact would not just be confined to shop workers. 'Catering staff, transport, security, cleaning and parish staff would also be affected. The only real way to guarantee freedom for retail staff and others is for the big stores to remain shut,' they say.

The leaders assert that setting aside Sunday in the Christian tradition for worship, recreation and family life 'was part of God's foundation for the way human

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Church leaders

beings were designed to operate.'

And they say that town residents would lose their one day of peace. 'We have a delightful town that is so much more than its shopping centre, and it doesn't need unregulated shopping on Sunday to destroy the peace and quiet which many residents greatly enjoy.'

The letter is also signed on behalf of the Jersey Evangelical Alliance, the Church of Scotland, the Elim Rock Church and the St Helier Methodist Centre.

The leaders ask: 'For the sake of our personal health and well-being, don't we need one day a week when the pace of life slows down and we can rest and enjoy leisure time with our friends and family?'

The 18-month trial has been proposed by Economic Development Minister Alan Maclean and is due to be debated by the States next week.

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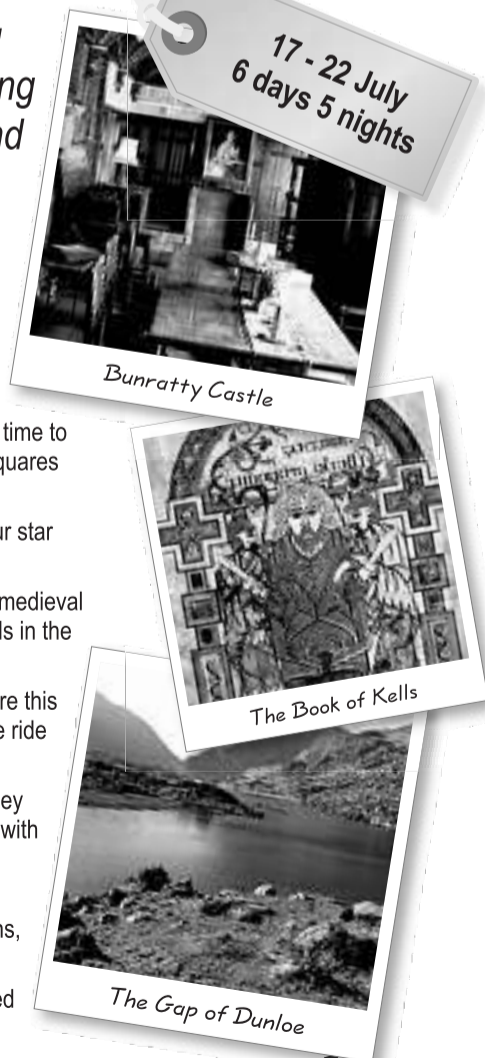
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READER OFFER

Move to stop States end-of-term pile-up

By Toby Chiang

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THE enormous amount of States work that Members face this week is an 'inevitable' consequence of the Chamber nearing the end of its three-year term, according to the Chief Minister.

But the vast public business agenda could be slimmed down in future following joint work that is due to be done by Scrutiny and the Chief Minister's Department.

Senator Ian Gorst faced questions at a quarterly meeting with the Corporate Services Scrutiny panel last week when he revealed that he had taken steps to try to prevent the build-up of States business that is common towards the end of an Assembly's term.

The Chamber was today due to begin its work one day early, in the hope that they can get through the packed agenda, which panel member Constable Deidre Mezbourian said ran to four pages.

Senator Gorst told the pan-



Chief Minister Ian Gorst

el: 'I think we said when we last met there is sadly an inevitability to the end of a government when it wants to complete the work it has set itself.'

'What I have done, in discussion with the president of the chairman's committee, is that we have agreed that an officer from Scrutiny and an officer from the Chief Minister's office will work together to see if we can put in place a process so that this can be alleviated in the future.'

At the same meeting, chaired by Deputy James Reed who was covering for

the regular chairman, Senator Sarah Ferguson, Senator Gorst also faced questions about the recent split between the Council of Ministers and External Relations Minister Sir Philip Bailhache over international tax compliance.

Sir Philip attempted to delay part of an intergovernmental tax-sharing agreement during the last States sitting by amending a proposition brought by the Council of Ministers until such a time that the rules applied to Jersey were also applied in other jurisdictions.

Senator Sir Philip's amendment was rejected, but the split led to criticism of the disagreement, which followed a move to bring in collective responsibility next year that will ensure the Council of Ministers presents a united front in future.

Senator Gorst said: 'Ministers, if they can at all avoid it, should not air their views in public. I think it can be very bad for our reputation and doesn't show that the government is working for the community in a joined-up way.'