



'Excuse me. When is your next delivery?'

A number of islanders have been in touch since the beginning of the year to share their stories of the different levels of customer service they received while doing their Christmas shopping.

While some of the stories were bad, some were great – which shows that a number of our retailers are doing their bit to try to make the high street as attractive to consumers as possible. If anything, it seemed to be the smaller, independent retailers who are really making a difference.

That said, a re-occurring complaint the Consumer Council has received was on the subject of what happened when something was out of stock.

In a number of the larger retailers in town and beyond, consumers seemed to get a very similar response when enquiring about an item that appeared to have been sold out. One conversation we were told about went like this:

Customer: 'Excuse me. I would like to buy one of the XXXX but I cannot see any more on the shelf.'

Retail assistant: 'Yes, we are out of stock – they've sold out.'

Customer: 'Will you be getting any more in before Christmas?'

Retail assistant: 'We don't know – we might do, we might not.'

Customer: 'What do you mean?'

Retail assistant: 'Well it all depends on when the next delivery arrives and what is in it.'

Customer: 'When is your next delivery due?'

Retail assistant: 'We don't know until it arrives.'

Customer: 'Really? You have no idea that a delivery is on its way until it gets here?'

Retail assistant: 'Yes.'

Customer: 'Well, could I request or make an order to ensure that a XXXX is included in the next delivery please?'

Retail assistant: 'We have no say on what is included in the delivery, I am afraid. We do not know what is going to be delivered until we open the containers.'

This particular consumer then went home, went on to the concerned company's website, placed an order for the product and had it delivered to the said store in time for Christmas!

As we said, this seemed to be a reoccurring complaint across a number of retailers. If there are any businesses out there who would like to shed some light as to why some of our big retailers have no idea a delivery is on its way or what is in it, then we would ask them to get in touch with the Jersey Consumer Council so that we can explain to islanders in our next issue.

Online shopping tax opinions

You may have noticed towards the end of last year that there were proposals to put GST on all of our online shopping in order to 'save the high street'. At present, anything costing less than £240 online is GST free, as the cost of collecting the tax would be more than the tax itself.

The JCC challenged those who were backing the call for the shopping tax to be added and it was pulled from the States budget at the 11th hour.

However, in dropping the idea, the Treasury Minister said it would return at 'some point after Brexit, due to EU laws'.

We are yet to work out exactly what was meant by the Minister, but remain ready to represent your views when the time comes – as well as look forward to being consulted by the States so that, unlike last time, consumers' opinions are taken into consideration before further announcements or decisions are taken.

The Consumers' Champion – We investigate and publicise anomalies in consumer affairs and aim to provide Islanders with accurate and timely information to help make **#InformedDecisions**

Chairman's message

We have some very exciting plans for Jersey's Consumer Council this year, starting with our new campaigns.

While we are going to wait just a little longer before revealing what it is we will be taking on in the first instance, you can rest assured it will be addressing one of the most common complaints/issues we receive at the Council.

In our recently published Business Plan, the JCC has committed to working on three major campaigns a year, where we intend to consolidate our efforts to make a significant difference to consumers' lives.

Our first major campaign will be launched before Easter and will keep running throughout the year. However, although we have ideas for our other two campaigns, we would like to hear from you as to what you think are the big issues? Yes, we all have little gripes, or stories about when things might go wrong. But if there is something that you consistently see being done in the wrong way or to the detriment of islanders, then we want to hear about it.

During the Spring the council will meet again to finalise what we will be working on for the rest of the year, so please do not wait around. Send us an email or drop us a line with all the details and leave the rest to us.

Save on your home energy bills

Would you like to spend less on your home energy bills and stay warmer? In February the States of Jersey will be launching a programme to help you do just that.

Local energy assessors have been trained to carry out Home Energy Audits on Jersey homes. A Home Energy Audit is a survey to tell you how efficient your home is, and the more energy efficient it is the less you will spend on your energy bills.

The audit gives you a personalised list of improvements (such as insulation and heating controls) that can increase your home's energy efficiency. The home improvements are listed in priority order so that you know where best to start. It also estimates how much energy your household currently uses and shows you how much energy and money you can save by making each of the suggested home improvements.

The cost of an audit will vary depending on factors such as the age, size and complexity of the property. As a rough guide an audit for an average 2-3 bed property may cost in the region of £200-£350. To launch the new programme the States of Jersey will be offering a time-limited £200 subsidy towards the cost of a Home Energy Audit. You can apply for this funding if you own the property and the property hasn't had a Home Energy Audit completed previously.

To find out more about Home Energy Audits and to apply for the subsidy visit www.gov.je/energyaudit



Our food price rise study

Throughout 2018 we have been monitoring the costs of four 'Caring Cooks' family favourite recipes at the Co-op, FoodHall/Morrisons, Iceland, Tesco-Alliance and Waitrose. We reported in May 2018 that from mid-January to mid-May the four recipes' ingredients increased in cost by an average of 5%.

Our chosen recipes, chicken pie, cottage pie, fruit crumble and flapjacks, closed the year an average 6.39% higher than at the beginning of 2018. The % increases did vary tremendously across our five supermarkets. As you can see from the table below the Co-op and Waitrose recorded the smallest % increases, whilst Iceland and Tesco-Alliance prices for the four recipes rose by 27.24% and 14.88% respectively on average.

Our price collector had to constantly be vigilant when gathering food data as package sizes change regularly and items are often out of stock, which may force the shopper to turn to more expensive substitutions. Increased costs are the very last thing that the consumer needs when the basic recipe ingredients have gradually increased throughout 2018. 2019 is not looking any rosier for the cash strapped shopper.

The JCC calls on the government to remember the impact their decisions have on the price of essential food items, to allow those on a tight budget to be able to eat a healthy diet.

The impact of Brexit cannot be underestimated in so many respects – and food costs increases for many islanders' will pose considerable difficulties. It is possible that the rises could be dramatic if tougher border controls come into effect between Europe and the UK, which will impact on our frequency of shipments, costs and food stock availability.



	Jan-18	May-18	Dec-18	% Change from Jan to Dec 18
	Total cost for the 4 recipes	Total cost for the 4 recipes	Total cost for the 4 recipes	
Co-op	14.36	14.97	14.85	+3.42
Iceland	13.14	14.55	16.72	+27.24
Food Hall/Morrisons	18.65	19.62	16.91	-1.05
Tesco Alliance	14.11	15.02	16.21	+14.88
Waitrose	16.00	15.75	16.44	+2.75

New schedule for 2019 lunchtime talks



Over 50 talks were given by professionals to members of the public last year in a highly successful series of free lunch time seminars arranged by the Consumer Council. The talks covered a wide range of topics and were designed to offer information on issues that can easily affect consumers in their everyday life.

Topics included Long Term Care and Lasting Powers of Attorney; Pensions; Bankruptcy; Making Wills and Probate issues; Data and Cyber Security; Consumer Rights; Shopping online safely; Visiting your Dr and Pharmacist and available support on some Mental Health issues.

The free talks will start again on Thursday 21st February and will take place every other Thursday at the Jersey Library from 1.05pm – 1.50pm. Seats will be offered on a first come first served basis.

Long Term Care and Lasting Powers of Attorney have been very popular topics and their importance is ongoing so we will be offering further talks on these topics during the year. Meanwhile topics until early April are listed below. They include new topics from Trading Standards, the Superintendent Registrar and the Community Policing team.

Those who attend a talk will be asked to give some feedback if they wish in either paper format or online so that the value of the talks can be monitored and ideas for new ones given.

The full schedule of topics from 21st February – 18th April will be available on the Consumer Council website which can be found at www.jerseyconsumercouncil.org.je or at the Jersey Library.

Dates	Talk	Given by
February 21	Long Term Care	Social Security LTC Team
March 7	Identity Theft	Community Policing Team.
March 21	Marriage in Jersey	The Superintendent Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages
April 4	Trading Standards Top Complaints and Your Rights	Trading Standards
April 18	TBC	