



Guernsey Song Project Guidelines

1. What is the **Guernsey Song Project**?

It is an initiative organised by the Guernsey Language Commission (GLC) and Guernsey Museums. It is about encouraging and supporting songwriters to include some Guernsey French in a new song. Through this project, we aim to:

- **raise the profile** of the language
- **forge positive bonds** between different community groups
- **create an important record of language use** – a collection of new songs, in different styles, which all include some Guernsey French

2. What is Guernsey French?

It is commonly called 'Guernsey French' or 'patois' but the formal name for Guernsey's unique language is 'Guernésiais' (*Jehr-nez-yay*). There is no standardised spelling system so you may also see this as Dgernésiais, Giérneziei or Gernesiés. Whatever you call it (and we don't mind), Guernsey's language is a variety of Norman French. It is one of the regional varieties of Old French, the language spoken by the English court and nobility following the Norman conquest of England in 1066. Guernsey, along with the other Channel Islands, continued speaking Norman which evolved into the language we know today. It was widely spoken in Guernsey up until the first half of the 20th century when its usage began falling into decline as parents, for a number of reasons, stopped speaking it to their children.

3. Why should I take part?

We hope that songwriters and musicians feel as excited as we do – here's a few reasons why you might choose to participate:

- **To learn some of Guernsey's language:** you might not know any and that's fine! (see Q5)
- **To go down in history:** this is the first event of its kind in the island and all tracks registered during the project will be kept in the language archive at Guernsey Museums. These will be used as an important resource for present and future generations

- **To perform:** all registered artists will be invited to take part in the Guernsey Song Project Gig on Friday 26th September, the European Day of Languages, at Castle Cornet. We aim to invite musicians who sing in other minority languages too – for example Breton, Cornish or Manx
- **To promote your work:** at the end of the project, it is hoped that most of the tracks will be released on a Guernsey Language Album in time for Christmas 2014
- **To go further:** you definitely don't have to write a song entirely in Guernésiais (see Q5) but if you do, the GLC will support your entry to a European song contest (see Q7)

4. I don't know any Guernsey French. Can I still take part?

Yes definitely. You are positively encouraged. As long as your new song includes some of the language, you are welcome to register it as part of the project. We invite songwriters from anywhere in the world, of any age, performing in any genre. We would love to see a mixture of styles in the songs registered. We could end up with a contender for a new 'national song of Guernsey' in hip hop or opera – who knows? 😊

5. I don't know any Guernsey French. Where do I start?

There are several places you could start and here are a few:

- **Visit our website** (www.guernseysongproject.org.gg), where we have posted a bibliography of where you can see and hear Guernésiais. This list includes existing online materials and books, some of which have audio content
- **Speak to someone** - we believe the best way to be inspired by the language is to hear the language first hand. Do you know anyone who speaks it? Why not meet up with them for a chat and get a feel of the different words and sounds you like. If you don't know any speakers already, this is where Ley Bohti comes in...

6. What is Ley Bohti?

Ley Bohti means 'the buddies' and this is a network of support we have set up for songwriters to meet speakers. (Pronunciation differs between parishes but some speakers say 'bohti' like it rhymes with 'potty'). We have a database full of speakers who have happily volunteered to help and we encourage artists to take advantage of this opportunity. Here are some different ways to use the Ley Bohti system:

- **Contact a member of 'Ley Bohti' and arrange to chat or meet up** – you can do this by contacting Jo at the Language Commission on 747264 or josephine.dowding@gov.gg. She will put you directly in touch with a Guernésiais speaker. All of the speakers on our list have signed up to this system and are expecting to be contacted about enquiries to do with the language (eg. how to say a word, or an expression for something)
- **Attend a Ley Bohti event** - we will be holding several during the project. They will include at least one *enne arleuvai* (an afternoon party) and at least one *enne serai* (an evening party). These will be very informal drop in sessions, held in a community hall or pub room. They are not designed to be

song writing workshops but more a chance to meet, chat, ask questions and to get some ideas. You might also choose to play some music at these sessions too. These dates will be announced on the website, Facebook and Twitter.

These 'buddy systems' have worked well in other minority languages and we would be delighted if these friendships through Ley Bohti were extended through the project and beyond.

In addition to the Ley Bohti events, we will also be hosting songwriting workshops during the project – dates to follow.

7. Does the whole song need to be in Guernésiais?

No, definitely not. Artists could choose to write just a chorus in the language, for example. There is no reason to write a song totally in Guernésiais unless you wish to. If you are tempted to write a song entirely in the language, the Commission will support you to enter the Liet International Competition, which is widely regarded as the multilingual Eurovision Song Contest. An entry alone could put our language on the European stage.

8. I've written a song with some Guernsey French in. What do I do now?

First of all, congratulations! Now we ask you to 'register' your song as part of the project. You can do this by emailing your name, song title and duration to info@guernseysongproject.org.gg. If you have the facility to record your song to a quality you feel is sufficient, you could also include an MP3 file or send a CD to:

Guernsey Song Project, Guernsey Museum, Candie Rd, GY1 1UG

Later on in the year, we will invite artists without recordings (or who would like to re-record their song) to attend a 'field recording' session. Details of these sessions will be sent out to all the registered artists and the members of the GSP working party – together with artists - will ensure consistency of the sound recordings. As we've said, we hope to release most of these tracks as an album and all of the recordings will be kept in the language archive at the Museum. With approval of artists, we also hope to feature some tracks on our website www.guernseysongproject.org.gg to keep participants inspired.

9. When does the project end?

We thought a suitable finish to the project would be the European Day of Language on 26th September 2014. All registered artists will be invited to play at a special Guernsey Song Project Gig, to be held in the Hatton Gallery at Castle Cornet.

10. How many songs can I register?

As many as you like. We cannot guarantee that all your tracks will appear on the CD but there is no limit to how many songs can be registered.

11. I've found some old poetry in Guernésiais – could I fit some new music to this and register this with you?

Yes. Songwriters are welcome to go down this route and there is an impressive catalogue of Guernsey poetry (look at our bibliography – check out Métivier as an example). When you register, please let us know if you have used an existing text.

You can always contact Jo from the Language Commission on info@guernseysongproject.org.gg or call 747264.

Good luck! / Bwon Chance!

Guernsey Language Commission



Guernésiais



@languagegg