

Directors of Tomorrow – Guernsey IoD Convention 2018

For someone who is keenly interested in politics and determined to learn more about Guernsey business, I decided that the Institute of Directors convention was the perfect opportunity to meet new people and learn more about the island I live on (even though I only live here five days of the week!).

I expected many great things from the convention, and it was many great things that I received. For starters I got to have lunch with someone who I'm greatly inspired by in terms of career, Alastair Stewart. His commanding yet intrigued nature resulted in everyone having questions rapidly fired at them, which occurred throughout lunch and later in the evening. To say I was thrown in the deep end is an understatement, but luckily I managed to stay above the surface.

Shortly after meeting Alastair, we were introduced to Simon Anholt the keynote speaker for the evening. At lunch, he presented interesting points to us about how to improve the Guernsey brand which I found very insightful.

During the lunch alone, I learnt more than I anticipated I would. I learnt about other people's opinions, the Guernsey brand/business and that Alastair was very pleased that I aspire to be a journalist. I later learnt that he doesn't forget anything you say.

The evening rolled around, and I was a bundle of excited nerves for whatever lay ahead. I didn't know what to expect, especially from the panellists but I was suitably impressed. Four people with interesting careers put forward fascinating points of view on all topics, some more vocal than others. I was particularly impressed with the well-reasoned answers from Richard Holmes who never fought for the spotlight but made clear and relevant points that I didn't get lost in.

Moreover, all panellists reacted well to the questions and topics and made sufficient points. However, I occasionally felt as though they lacked in engaging those who are a novice to the business world like myself. When the topic of education in Guernsey was brought up, a fire was ignited in most of them, including Simon Anholt. The provocative point stated by audience member Jo Stoddart led to a heated debate throughout the audience and induced discussion and incredulation on the student table. The point from Jo highlighted the possible issue that if people were looking to come to Guernsey to work and desired to put their children in private education like they had done elsewhere but there was no room in the colleges in Guernsey, it would be unlikely that they would come to Guernsey. To this Simon responded that the obvious solution is to put more funding into States schools. This received a huge round of applause.

The most interesting points discussed on this topic were put forward by Richard and Simon which made the debate even more thrilling and exciting.

One aspect of the evening that I found extremely nerve-wracking yet enjoyable was when Alastair, ever assertive, made his way over to the student table and asked each of us a question relating back to what we may have discussed with him at lunch. Unsurprisingly, he remembered that I aspire to be a journalist so asked me what my opening line for my headline article in the Guernsey press about the Guernsey brand would be. Despite my mind going blank for at least five seconds, I like to think I conjured up a sufficient answer. Although, when Alastair also asked me what I thought of Guernsey and its brand and my response was that I live in Herm, I don't believe that was the answer he was expecting. However, as I stated on the night, just because I live on a different island it doesn't mean that what occurs in Guernsey doesn't apply to me.

The evening as a whole is something that will stick with me for a long time, and for many reasons. I met new people, learnt more about what I'm interested in and was challenged, which is always worthwhile, even though it feels daunting at the time. I'm extremely grateful to have been given this opportunity and the knowledge and understanding it has provided

me, and I will never forget the fact I answered a difficult question from Alastair Stewart in front of hundreds of people. I don't think it's possible to forget that.

Most decisions Guernsey make/will make will displease some, so the target for the Guernsey brand shouldn't be to perfect it, but to improve it and resolve the issues that affect current and future generations.