

■ *Flying the flag for Liberate*
(l-r): Charlie Atkinson, Lauren McSwiggan, Pippa McCathie, Martin Gavet and Ellie Jones

Prospect rep **Martin Gavet's** passion for trust and honesty at work is also the driver for his campaign for LGBTQ rights on the Channel Islands, he tells **Boc Ly**

LOTS OF people talk about making changes to their lives, their jobs and even, with the general election just behind us, dreams of changing the world.

Martin Gavet is actually working for positive changes, both professionally and personally.

His role at Guernsey's department for health and social services is concerned with organisational changes and how to help individuals manage professional upheaval.

"I believe that a lot of change is based around fear and how to address the fear of change," says Martin.

"Quite often organisations handle change in terms of process but they don't address the psychological aspects – the human and social aspects to help people move on."

The job dovetails nicely with Martin's trade unionism. He's been a member of the Association of Guernsey Civil Servants for his entire career of 22 years and counting. In 2008 the association became a branch of Prospect, for whom he is now a rep.

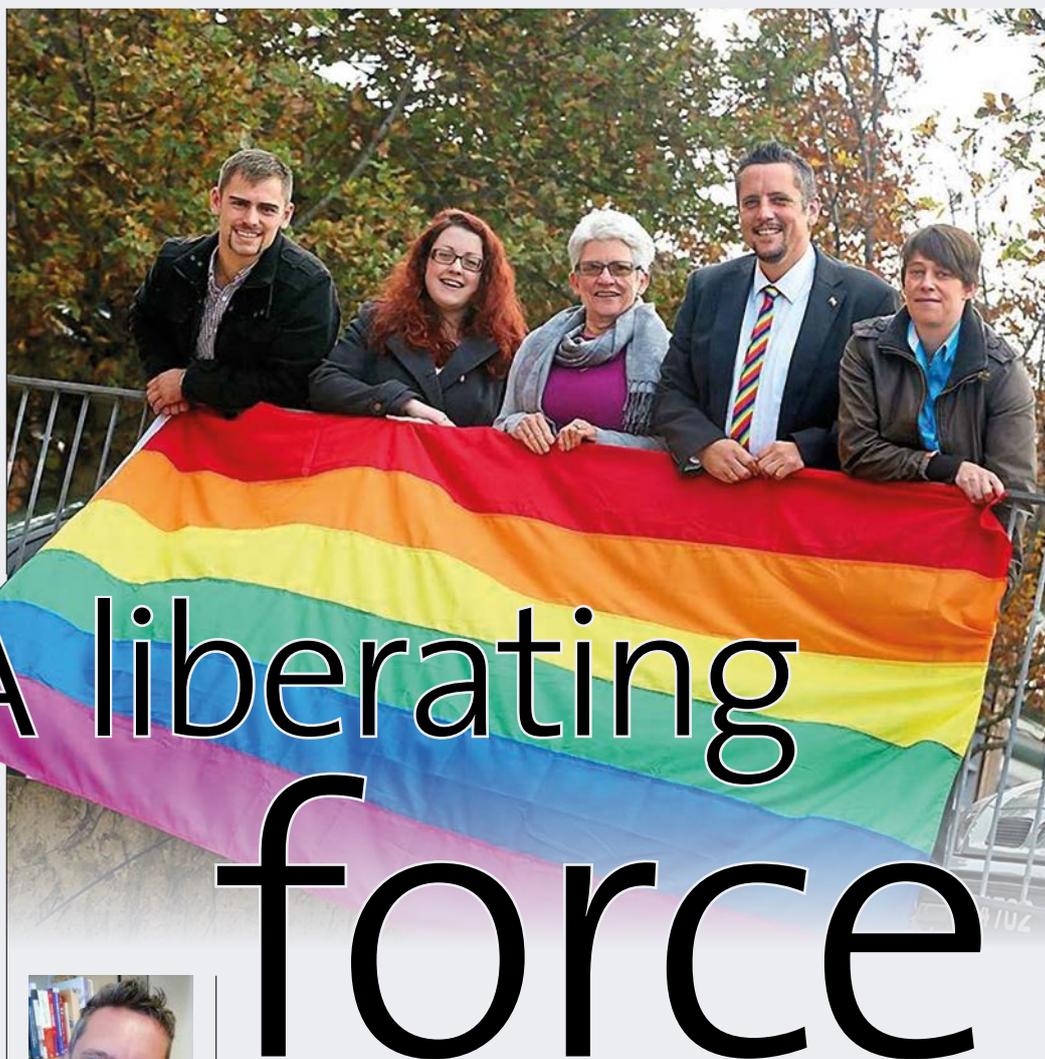
"As a trade unionist, I'm aware that people are the greatest asset for an organisation and you need to look after their welfare. If you don't build honest, truthful relationships with your staff, then trust goes out of the window."

Liberate

Trying to build trust and fostering honest relationships where there was formerly conflict also lies at the heart of a charity called Liberate, which Martin co-founded last February.

It aims to support people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning (LGBTQ), campaign for legal reforms and educate the wider community about LGBTQ issues.

Liberate is not just Guernsey-based,



A liberating force



'Liberate is fully inclusive, it has straight people as well as those that identify as LGBT on the committee'

but actively works for Jersey and the other Channel Islands, and its efforts have not gone unnoticed.

"It's a very beautiful island but because of its insularity there are some deeply ingrained social prejudices," says Martin, who has lived there most of his life.

"We've been recognised as a real catalyst for change in the local media and we've got a lot of respect from the wider community for how we have conducted ourselves. We're not confronting people – it's about having a conversation."

Liberate has formed key relationships with local politicians and faith leaders and is working with them on areas such as gay marriage, not yet recognised, and other legislative and policy reform.

It lobbied successfully in 2014 for gender reassignment surgery to be funded by the State.

Guernsey has no equivalent of the UK's Equality Act, rues Martin, who would like to see similar legislation brought in by the island's parliament.

As every campaigner knows, it's going to be a long road, but Liberate

is going from strength to strength. It has established a branch in Jersey and as well as campaigning for reform and providing support to the LGBTQ community, it has held several successful events across the islands.

Martin adds: "The good thing about Liberate is that it is fully inclusive and we have people who are straight on our committee, as well as those that identify as LGBT."

In 2007, Martin was diagnosed with a life-threatening pituitary tumour and had to face the fear of dying. That gave him the courage to come out as a gay man. It brought home to him "that life is for living and you have to make every moment count".

He enjoys writing, cooking, arts, kayaking, tai chi, doing yoga and admits that he could be one of those "annoying people who lives life to the full".

Even if he is annoying (in the nicest sense of the word) he's still changing the world one day at a time.

■ **Find out more:** www.liberate.gg/

■ **See Prospect's equality pages and find out how to join its LGBTQ network:** bit.ly/P_equal