

STATES OF JERSEY

Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel Fort Regent

WEDNESDAY, 27th MAY 2009

Panel:

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour (Chairman)

Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier (Vice-Chairman)

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade

Connétable G.F. Butcher of St. John

Mr. I. Barclay (Panel Adviser)

Witness:

Mr. R. Travert

Present:

Mrs. E. Liddiard (Scrutiny Officer)

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour (Chairman):

Good, well, I would like to welcome you, Roy. Thank you very much for coming. We will just have a couple of minutes and then we will go with the formalities basically when we press the recording machine. Okay, it is ready. Okay, Mr. Roy Travert, I would like to welcome you to the session. First of all before we get into the meet we will introduce each other to each other. So, Roy Le Hérissier, Deputy of St. Saviour, Chairman.

Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier:

Deputy Trevor Pitman, St. Helier, Vice Chair.

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

Deputy Montfort Tadier from St. Brelade.

Mr. I. Barclay (Panel Adviser):

Ian Barclay, sport and leisure consultant advising the panel.

Mrs. E. Liddiard (Scrutiny Officer):

Elizabeth Liddiard; Scrutiny Officer.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay, and ...?

Mr. R. Travert:

I am Roy Travert. I was Chairman of Support of the Fort Liaison Group and I was Liaison Officer for the Fort Users' Association.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay, well, thank you, Roy. The panel runs on the basis that witnesses are protected, so to speak, in their evidence and so we will not go through the formality of administering an oath in that regard. So, we will go through the questions, but there will be a lot of opportunities for you to speak on other issues that you have got and obviously that come to mind, and we will try and finish just before 12.00 p.m. So, again, thank you very much for coming because I know you have other things to do, so to speak. It is very kind of you and we know you played a very active role in the history of the Fort, so to speak. So, I will kick off. How does the management at Fort Regent communicate or when you were in charge how did it communicate and liaise and so forth with the Fort Users' Association, so as to provide information and to receive feedback from you?

Mr. R. Travert:

Well, generally at the time when the announcement to privatise Fort Regent came out, there was no liaison between Fort Regent management and any of the users group.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Can you give us the date of that?

Mr. R. Travert:

I do not have that ...

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I think it was the early 1990s, was it?

Mr. R. Travert:

November 2002 ... and I had a letter the day before the meeting was going to take place of the announcement by the then Senator Mike Vibert. It was to have a meeting to tell everybody at Fort Regent - interested parties, groups, I had a karate school up there - what the ongoing plans would be and that was to privatise Fort Regent, hand Fort Regent over to private developers for £1 and to basically give away a public asset. We had no correspondence from any of the Fort management prior to that date. So, generally I would say the management did not give us any detail of any future development and what we had from them, I called a public meeting up in the weights area which we had the *J.E.P.* (*Jersey Evening Post*) come up and they took a photograph with us, purely to show that the public did not want to see Fort Regent go into private development. Subsequently from that we held various meetings as things came up in the press and the media and the management of Fort Regent were obviously in attendance, and that was Vic Bourgoise at the time. Whether they were in favour of the development or not, you would have to ask Mr. Bourgoise that because at the time we could not get any answers. It was to push the development and handing over of Fort Regent, and where I have seen a change in the last public meeting that we had where the management were talking and even in the *J.E.P.* last night we saw that the management was saying that: "Fort Regent is a public asset. It is doing extremely well. We are doing a great job in running it." That was not what the consensus there at the time was. So, as far as the management giving the Fort Users' Association information, we did not get that at the time, no.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

So, when this announcement was made - and as you said, it came as a shock - did you get hold of the politicians in charge of the Fort?

Mr. R. Travert:

We did go to various politicians. Senator Ted Vibert gave us an enormous amount of support and it was eventually through Senator Ted Vibert that we halted the expressions of interest because it went out and I have got a copy of it here; I do not know if you have a copy of the expressions of interest for Peter Mann Partnerships; do you have that?

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

No.

Mr. R. Travert:

Okay, well, I have a copy of it here.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

We should have it, so that is kind of you to provide it.

Mr. R. Travert:

You should have it, yes, so I have brought a copy of it here and also the feasibility study that was going to be ongoing, which was the basis from which we were fighting this from, and if you do not have this information I have it here for you. Subsequently, we held various meetings. Senator Ted Vibert was involved. We had meetings with Lyndon Farnham - Deputy Farnham at the time - and we also had a meeting with Deputy Collin Egré. All of them were very tentative not to be involved. It was only Senator Vibert that actively took questions to the States on our behalf to find out exactly what was behind the scenes of what was going to go on. We were very concerned that a public asset like the

waterfront, at this time, was going to be handed over to private developers and the expressions of interest was for £1; it was the handing over of 22 acres of public land for £1. Now, as we had seen with the waterfront, public outcry at that sort of investment, shall we say, was extremely high. So, we did not want to see the same mistakes being made at Fort Regent as we had seen on the waterfront and that is why we started a campaign. We subsequently split the Fort Users' Association into another group which would be more politically active which would support the Fort Liaison Group. I then became Chairman of that and that left the Fort Users' Association - which was primarily to look after the things inside Fort Regent, issues with clubs, heating, lighting, whatever they had issues with - support the Fort Liaison Group was going to be actively pursuing the retaining of Fort Regent as a sports centre for the Island of Jersey and a community centre, which it is and still is and that is why we did that. So, Ted Vibert was extremely instrumental in keeping Fort Regent open as its present state.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

So, when you were dealing with this shock announcement, did you see the then President of the Education Committee to try and get into his thinking about this?

Mr. R. Travert:

Yes, the thinking was to hand it all over to the private developers and that was the end of the subject.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Did he tell you it was essentially a non negotiable position?

Mr. R. Travert:

He said that the funds were not available. Fort Regent was losing vast amounts of money; it was uneconomical and unviable to run. I saw a repeat of this in the *J.E.P.* last night where we had comments from James Reed and it was the same comments as we were getting in 2002: "The heating is inadequate; the windows need changing; access is bad to Fort Regent" and all of these are false, misconceptions. I do not agree with any of these things whatsoever. We still have an extremely valuable and viable sports

complex at Fort Regent. So, what we were hearing in 2002, we are still hearing now and I still believe, firmly, that is to push public land into private developers' hands. Now, we would not see the handing over of Mont Orgueil Castle which we have seen millions of pounds of public funds spent on it; we would not see the handing over of Elizabeth Castle into private developers' hands. The reason I would suggest that this is happening is we have a 22 acre site in the middle of town which is commercially, extremely valuable. So, access to Fort Regent ... and I would like to come to access if I can just for a moment; is that okay?

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Yes.

Mr. R. Travert:

Because I keep hearing this and we heard this a lot of the time that access is bad to Fort Regent and even in the public meeting we had the other week. I would say footfall access into Fort Regent can be improved with the suggestions last night in the *J.E.P.* and what we had in the last public meeting was escalators and the car parking in Snow Hill. If access was bad we would not have the numbers of people visiting Fort Regent that you had in your last meeting put forward by the Fort Regent management. Those people would not have that access to Fort Regent; 400,000-odd people are visiting. We have concerts up there that cater for 2,000 people. Now, those 2,000 people drive to Pier Road car park; they park; they have direct access straight into Fort Regent; up the escalators, straight into the Fort. That is extremely viable access. Now, Fort Regent originally was developed with the main road coming down from Fort Regent to service the Island's military. That was the whole idea of Fort Regent. The infrastructure of our road system in Jersey is based on Fort Regent, so that the military could access all points on the Island extremely quickly. They could come down straight from the Glacis field and just go to all Martello Towers, et cetera, around the Island for any invading army. So, the idea that Fort Regent was built to keep people out is a fallacy as far as I am concerned. It is a fallacy purely politically motivated so that we give the impression to the general public that Fort Regent does not have good access. It is this big white elephant. I know I digressed there just a little bit. Shall we move on then?

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I will move on to Deputy Pitman.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Yes, if we could go back to the liaison group itself. Why has the position of chairman not been replaced?

Mr. R. Travert:

From all these meetings that we had, and I put a very public campaign forward to make sure that the public was informed about what the President was trying to do at the time. I put a very public campaign forward to make sure that people were aware what was going on. Following on from that - from the various meetings that we had - the reassurances started coming back to us through the work of Ted Vibert when it was rescinded in the States they were going to stop the expressions of interest. They were not going push forward with that. So we had various meetings afterwards. Various issues came up that we had meetings and then the stand of Senator Vibert changed. It changed from wanting to give it over to listening to us because we had a very public campaign and convinced him that Fort Regent was a valuable public asset. I then had a meeting with the Chief Minister, Senator Walker, and the same thing. I put forward the case that as the Support the Fort Liaison Group that we are there to liaise between the public and act as a body that people come and talk to me and the members that I had, and then we could liaise that to the relevant States Members. Subsequently from the meeting with the Chief Minister, he reassured me that no decisions had been made on Fort Regent and no decisions would be made until we had had full public consultation which is where we are now. I know this has come from yourself, Mr. Pitman, so I would say that this is now an ongoing thing from that last meeting that I had had. So we suspended the group because we did not feel that it was necessary. We had achieved what we wanted to achieve with the group and it was not necessary to continue that beating the drum for no reason whatsoever. We had achieved our goal and it was only sensible then to take a step back and see how things developed because we had not heard anything for some time until obviously these public

meetings now.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Does the Association itself still meet?

Mr. R. Travert:

I do not know because I have not been a part of the Association for some time because it really was not necessary to do so. What happened with the Fort Users Association, it had achieved its goal. The Fort Users Association was purely there in Fort Regent in the early days as a liaison group between clubs and the management for Fort Regent for various issues. It was never set up or had the intention to be politically motivated, as we needed to be, to bring to the public's attention what was happening up there. I do not know if it still meets, to be honest with you. I do not know.

Deputy M. Tadier:

The next question is really a standard one which we tend to ask everyone. We have heard that there are certainly lots of things which are working very well at Fort Regent to do with sports and concerts, et cetera. So really could you summarise what you think is working well at Fort Regent. Then once you have done that, suggest any improvements that you think could be made.

Mr. R. Travert:

Everything is working well at Fort Regent. **[Laughter]** Fort Regent is an extremely successful sports complex. We have concerts. We just had the World Karate Championships. We have just had all sorts of events that go on as a multi use facility. As far as we are concerned or I am concerned, and the people I was working with at the time, it should stay as it is. It should be developed as Projet 181. It should be utilised as a sports and community centre. I have to state at this point in time that I have closed my karate school at Fort Regent. I closed that last summer. The reason I closed that was purely due to escalating costs. My rent at Fort Regent for a 2 hour session each week was at the end of the year over £4,000. With insurances that we have to take out for our instructors and everything we were

looking at nearly £5,000 to insure students and instructors to be teaching. I had to take a proactive view on whether it was viable to continue to do that and it was not viable to continue to do that. So as far as my interests go in Fort Regent now, I use Fort Regent regularly; every day nearly. There are still a lot of my friends that still have their schools and everything at Fort Regent. But financially it became very unviable for me to continue to teach up there. Any new clubs wanting to start up there get charged a higher rate for room than someone who is presently already there. I think the rent I was paying was £17.50 or £18 an hour where if someone new coming into the development they would be charged £27 an hour, for example. As far as I was concerned, that was extremely restrictive for encouraging any new sports clubs or some people would start and then 3 months later they would be gone again because the rents were so high. As we see with a lot of other companies on the Island, they are heavily subsidised by the taxpayer of Jersey. The subsidy that we saw at the last meeting was extremely low for subsidising something as valuable as the health of the Island at Fort Regent. The room rents when I first started up there I think were in the region of £6 an hour and that was subsidised. Obviously we were all aware that economies have to be looked at; the economy of the Fort, how we are going to pay for things. Then a gradual increase has taken place over the last 5, 6, 7, 8 years which is perfectly acceptable until it gets to the point it becomes unviable. I was not being paid. Most of the clubs at Fort Regent, the people who are teaching up there are not being paid for the work and the hours they put in. We had to pay an extremely heavy fee to train up there. I think that might be an area that you want to look at is the rents that people are having to find every month up there on room rents because it can be extremely off-putting for encouraging new people to go up. So what is working well? Everything. We have concerts up there which are full all the time. We have sports events up there all the time. What does not work well is when people see this in the paper all the time where people still come up and ask me what is happening with Fort Regent? Is it going? Is sport going? What is happening? What we should be doing is putting the message out there that Fort Regent is going to stay as it is as a sports complex for the people to have at the end of another 5 years if funds can be found to develop it. We have had massive investment in the weight training area at Fort Regent. I do not know if you have seen that.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Yes, sure.

Mr. R. Travert:

It is a fantastic facility. When we had the karate tournaments coming over here, we would have 1,000 people coming into the Island. The one thing that attracted them most of all was Fort Regent. The fact that we would have it in a Napoleonic fort and they absolutely loved it. I think there are a lot of heritage sites to develop in the Fort there that can certainly be looked at because people really enjoyed coming over to that development. I have no issues with anything that is going on with Fort Regent because it is being well run now. It is being run to the best of its ability in its present form. So I do not see that there are any issues with anything. I do not have the general public coming up to me and saying: "Fort Regent is terrible. Why is it still running?" I have people come and say what a fantastic complex we have. That is purely down to the way that is being run now and money being invested back into the facilities up there.

Deputy M. Tadier:

To what extent do you think that nostalgia plays a part in that sense that ... I think Fort Regent has always been a sports centre but in the past - certainly when I was younger and I think when Deputy Pitman was younger - there were also extra facilities that you could go to which were not directly to do with sport but were to do with leisure; the ghost train, the slides, Quasar, et cetera. Are you happy with the way the Fort has gone and moved away from that or do you think there is still an element which it could do both?

Mr. R. Travert:

Yes, because there are certainly outlying areas around the back areas - East Ditch area - and those were all earmarked in the R.Q.A. (Roger Quinton Associates) report to be developed, whether it was private development on the swimming pool site. You have to look at they have centralised everything into the core of Fort Regent and obviously if it is not economically viable to be running these areas out in the

East Ditch and everything then they are going to be left because obviously Fort Regent has to try and make as much money as it can. So there are certain areas which the R.Q.A. report put out for the lifts from Snow Hill, restaurants on the top area there, an information centre at the back there. There are gardens ... of course the whole of the top of the range there which you could have access from which would certainly give you your town park aspect where people would have access from Snow Hill, could sit up there in their lunch hour, relax and it is central to town. So there is also that option if you had your car parking in Snow Hill, direct access up the rock face as the R.Q.A. report says, you could use all of those areas and try and make them more economically viable. Yes, there are a lot of areas there that can be done. But as far as the sports, that has been centralised into the centre of Fort Regent which was the sensible thing to do, to be honest with you. If it is not viable you do not stay in business. Yes, there are lots of areas that can be developed.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Could I just ask about the rent, Roy? Why is there a difference between someone who is established and someone who is new because, as you say, that would seem to be a deterrent?

Mr. R. Travert:

Absolutely. I do not know. You would have to ask the management of Fort Regent that because there was a preferential rate for people who had just started although when speaking to some of the management about this, they were open-minded to try to come to some compromise because I know that when I shut my school, some of my students wanted to continue to train. Then they went to them and then 3 months later they had to stop training because the rents were unviable because it was 5 people paying £30 an hour. It becomes very expensive by the end of the month. I have no idea why they would do that. The only reason I would think is to deter any new people going up there to put forward the case that Fort Regent is not making money, et cetera. I mean I do not know. You would have to speak to the management about why they would structure it like that.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Just one more point if I may. Do you really think there is a conspiracy - I do not use that word ... I use it in the broader sense - to basically sell off Fort Regent into private hands? Is that still a ...

Mr. R. Travert:

I think that we now have a situation where we have the town regeneration project that is ongoing. I think that as with all these things ... and I have not seen any change in the timetable that they put out in 2002 to where we are now with Fort Regent. I mean we had the situation there where I have seen the plans for the private development. They are knocking down the Pier Road car park. That is earmarked for apartments now. The Planning Department, all of that area down on the south of Fort Regent, all that area there is earmarked for development. This has been in the press over here on numerous occasions but it has all gone very quiet at the moment. Personally I do not have an objection to developing areas that need to be developed. I think that we have to have that. But if it is to the detriment to what the general public is entitled to then I do not agree with that. I think that there is still an ongoing drive within the States for whatever reasons to develop Fort Regent and to hand that over to private developers. I think it is a very serious issue where we have 22 acres extremely valuable land in the middle of town that would be handed to private developers. What we did not want to see because a lot of the people I was with at the time did not want to see the same scenario as we have at the waterfront where we are hooked into a 150 year lease. That land has gone to the developers which is still being subsidised by your public of Jersey; the swimming pool down there, £400,000 a year. That was at the time ... given of course that it was the right thing to do to put it down to the waterfront because we are going to save £200,000 a year at Fort Regent and in fact it has cost double to run the swimming pool. I asked who was responsible for the £10.7 million it cost to build the waterfront pool because Fort Regent pool would have been able to rebuild the pool at Fort Regent for £4.odd million. It seems like an awful lot of money that no one was accountable for from the Tourism Development Fund that that money was spent down there. That is half the money that we were talking about to get Fort Regent developed - which at the time was between £18 million to £20 million - for one swimming pool. So, yes, I do believe there is still a drive to give Fort Regent over to private development. It is not in the public's interest to do that. As we can see in the present economic downturn at the moment, the people

that I am associated with - the general public - do not want to see us in the same situation as we have down at the waterfront where we hand public land over to private developments and then still end up paying for it, where the goals of having public/private partnerships are not achieved and having the revenue stream that we should have from that where the taxpayer is not paying that. I still believe that that is an ongoing thing, yes, most definitely.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

We have looked, Roy, at the views of the Users Association and you have discussed heritage and all these sorts of things. Did the Association ever get into looking at what the different options were? For example, obviously you have spoken very positively about the sports centre and I know Deputy Tadier is quite keen on the centre of excellence idea as well which seems to go with it. But there is also a view that we need to regenerate facilities for teenagers there. They just disappeared over a few years, for example. There is also a proposal on the table that was linked to a church - but it could be unlinked - that there should be a community centre of some kind built on the Glacis Field where the swimming pool was. There has been a proposal that there should be a budget hotel. These are not random things but people have said ... and the big one which we are going to discuss or you have already discussed this, somehow redevelop the Fort as a heritage site and see whether a heritage site can work together with a sports site. Did your Users Association look at all these issues and see whether they could work together?

Mr. R. Travert:

Yes, we did. We spoke with a lot of people. I put an opinion poll out which you will have in the report I did in 2003. A lot of people's feedback to me personally was that we have a Napoleonic fort, where is the heritage aspect? We have things like Living Legend which has got a history show that goes on that is very intuitive for the Island. It shows our history. Fort Regent could be linked with ... Mont Orgueil Castle has a similar sort of thing now. That could be an ongoing thing that could be done at Fort Regent and give more of its history interactive-wise where you do have this around Fort Regent. I think that could work extremely well with all of the propositions that people have put forward. I think there does

need to be more information of the history of the Fort because it has a very long heritage to it. Yes, I think it could work well up there if there was a centre put again with the lifts from Snow Hill, you can walk in from town straight up to there, you could have an information centre, you could have a show. But then this all comes back down to the tourism aspect of the Island. But if you could link that with sites like Gorey Castle. We have the Jersey War Tunnels which is extremely intuitive down there. They have got shows. They have got information running all the time for people to look at. If it could be done in conjunction with that as part of a heritage scheme then, yes, I think it could work very well up there.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

What about the regeneration of facilities because it is often said if families go up there, it is okay for the very young kids in the family but the older children basically there is nothing for them? What is your view on that?

Mr. R. Travert:

Fort Regent had the idea, and the States pushed forward the idea, that you should pay as you play. So what effectively they did, they took away any emphasis for the States for the management of Fort Regent to take responsibility for providing those facilities which is obviously where we have seen the decline of East Ditch, Quasar. It was more put into the public/private partnership mode where it was up to the clubs to establish themselves in doing that. If you do that you are going to produce a very niche market where you are going to have dancing classes, you are going to have the gymnastic classes where they pay the clubs themselves into doing that rather than paying Fort Regent. The only thing that they did was produce the Active card which incorporates that to a degree where people if they have their Active card, they can participate in certain classes within Fort Regent. You are quite right in that there are not skate parks at Fort Regent for the youngsters to use. There are not meeting rooms for the youngsters, as such, for them to meet. But I think it was felt by the management at the time - which we did discuss this with them at various meetings - that that might not sit with the present facilities that are already there unless you could have a specific area for them to do that. I think personally that there are

areas that certainly that you could have meeting rooms for them. There are lots of spaces that are not utilised but there are not those facilities at Fort Regent at the moment. There are those facilities within a club environment which I would recommend anybody wanting to do a specific sport. We have fencing up there, there is 5-a-side football, there are all sorts of things going on which are in a club environment, which socially is probably more beneficial for teenagers to be involved in to be with adults anyway. So I think that if there is anything that can come out of that is that the teenagers benefit from a social environment being in a club which is very beneficial to them.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Thank you. I will move to Deputy Pitman.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

What are your thoughts and the groups' over the past few years about the possibility of a conference centre facility to think about and even the casino which was quite a hot topic a few years ago?

Mr. R. Travert:

It was. We put in the report that I did, which we spoke in our meetings at great length about, because we realised that the conference centre is a great idea. There are conferences at Fort Regent anyway. I think if you are going to look for conference business ... because we step outside of what our remit as the Fort Users Liaison Group in talking about this. But as far as the general consensus for Fort Regent, a conference centre is an ideal venue for it. You could incorporate that with all these other ... hotel, budget hotel. It is on site. You could generate business for Fort Regent to try and pay for it in that way. But we were told at the time that conferences do not generate that much money and they normally run at a loss. I do not have any figures for that. But Fort Regent as far as a conference centre, absolutely. The rotunda is a huge space which could be converted; multi levels. You could have meeting rooms. There are all sorts of options that are available for it. The casino issue, we put in the report that the casino as far as we ... we were not against the casino but the ideal venue for it would have been more suitable down at the waterfront. You have a lot of bars. You have a lot of clubs down there. It is adult

entertainment at the end of the day which is more geared towards down that end of town. You have 2 separate entities. Fort Regent is a sports community centre. A casino would bring in revenue. There is no doubt about it. They make money which if it was done in conjunction with Fort Regent, funds and revenue from the casino based at the waterfront could then be used to regenerate Fort Regent. That was an idea that was put forward when we had our meetings. Whether you are in favour of a casino or not, that is up for the public of Jersey to decide. What we looked at was the overall facilities, whether it was suitable for it or not. One thing that you could have at Fort Regent if you want it as a gambling venue is a bingo hall because we had a lot of people talking about: "There is no bingo. There is no central thing for bingo now." It is a very good revenue stream and there are a lot of people who like to participate in that. So a bingo hall at Fort Regent was brought up on numerous occasions. When I stood in the elections in 2005, when I was talking to a lot of people then, they were still talking about Fort Regent which is why I stood in 2005 based on that. The issue of that bingo hall was brought up lots of times because people do not view that as a mainstream form of gambling where a casino is viewed. I know it has been brought back to the States on numerous occasions for the casino and it has been defeated every time.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Sorry, to interrupt. We could find out obviously from other people. Oddly enough I was at a meeting last night of a voluntary group where bingo was put forward on the very grounds you said. What happened to the bingo idea?

Mr. R. Travert:

Bingo was originally done at Springfield.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Yes, quite. I thought it was running there, yes.

Mr. R. Travert:

For a long time and obviously Springfield was redeveloped. I think it did take place in various smaller venues but it was extremely popular in Springfield over the years when it was down there. I think Fort Regent is an ideal venue for that. I do not know of any bingo places going at the moment. I mean I do not know.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I thought Springfield was still the site. It still runs there.

Mr. R. Travert:

In a smaller vein.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Yes, in a smaller way. But you, yourselves, were never given an official reply, so to speak, why bingo was not accepted?

Mr. R. Travert:

No.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

On the same theme, I was interested in where did the feedback come from that conference facilities were not really a viable way forward? Was that from the States?

Mr. R. Travert:

That came from the management of Fort Regent and that came from Senator Mike Vibert in the meetings that we had. They were not against it. They wanted to see it developed but they always came up with the moneys would not be available to develop the site for the conference centre and even if it was developed, that did not make the sort of money that you would need to run it.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

That was Mike Vibert?

Mr. R. Travert:

That was Senator Mike Vibert, yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

But there is a sense in which Fort Regent already is a conference centre, is it not, a makeshift one?

Mr. R. Travert:

Yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

And it does host certainly the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Mr. R. Travert:

Yes, it does.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I presume that that brings in a fair amount of money.

Mr. R. Travert:

Yes, but you would have to speak to them on the revenue stream on that. I do not know.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Much has been talked about the possibility of having a budget hotel then tying that into the sports centre of excellence, et cetera. What are your feelings on that?

Mr. R. Travert:

I think it is a great idea. I think it should have been done a long time ago. You have volleyball tournaments that come over. It would be central to the site. They would be on site. I think that would draw a lot of people to booking sports event led tourism which I think has got to be a key market that Jersey should be aiming at. The Olympics are going to take place in England very shortly - in a very short time span - and there should be some promotion of the facilities we have on the Island for offsite training to bring people over. Fort Regent is an ideal venue for that. As far as the facilities go up there, I think that certainly needs to be looked at definitely.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Just another issue that has arisen, Roy, is the issue of catering in the Fort. Did your Association have any views on how that could be developed?

Mr. R. Travert:

It appears that there is a contract with the contractors up there and they are very reluctant to give that up. There were various venues that started up by the weights area to give healthy food options but then they stopped obviously due to lack of footfall. I think it is very difficult to provide the sort of catering that people want without changing a lot of their eating habits because a lot of people are still not into eating healthy or understand the benefits of eating healthy. The food that is served is normal - chicken nuggets, burgers, chips, et cetera - which people want to eat and you cannot stop that. You have to make whatever is going to be catering-wise up there viable. I know a lot of people just want to go up, train and then they go home because they have got their food prepared and everything at home. So to get the footfall of people to stay to eat in a health bar environment, in some places it would work; maybe another sports centre where that is all you have. But people generally when they go up to the Fort, they go up, they do their activity and then they leave. We have seen them come and we have seen them go at Fort Regent. I do not think that a catering facility purely based on health food would survive up there. I do not think there is a footfall for it and I do not think it is something that people really ... it is a priority for them up there.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay, thank you.

Mr. R. Travert:

A good eating restaurant, maybe. With the views and everything over the bays and everything, I think that would draw people up where they could sit out, have the views over the bay, the sun setting, have a nice environment to do that in. That is a totally different thing to having a health food place up there. That would be viable I think.

Deputy M. Tadier:

We have already spoken about the current economic climate. It is not a phrase I like so we will just call it the looming recession. What emphasis do you think should be placed on any redevelopment at Fort Regent in the context of the recession?

Mr. R. Travert:

I think that Fort Regent should be developed along the R.Q.A. report. There is no doubt in mind that was put forward as a master plan, so to speak, and nothing has changed in the last 10 years from when that was written in 1999. Nothing has changed as far as we keep running around in circles. I think Deputy Vallois said it quite rightly in the paper last night. We keep looking at the same thing and coming up with the same answer. Until the funds are found and made available to do this, this is going to keep going round and we are going to keep going back on the same subjects. The answer to that keeps coming out as the same answer: sports centre, centre of excellence, health, et cetera. It is still that. It is still very viable and that is what it has been for the last 20, 30 years from when we were children. But the funds have got to be found for that. People that I have spoken to when I was standing, they are fully aware that those funds are not available at the present time. I think what upsets a lot of people is when we hear the funds are not available to develop Fort Regent but we will find £150 million in the fund somewhere that has just been sitting there in the Stabilisation Fund where we could have had

£5 million a year ... which was going to be developed £2 million a year over 5 years or 10 years to put forward for the development. I think that is the thing that upsets people where they see there is that money there but it is not being spent in the area for the public of the Island. We are all aware of the present economies in the world. I put forward the idea that money could be found from the Stabilisation Fund because I think a lot of problems that people have with the Stabilisation Fund at the moment, and giving this money away for the maintenance of States property, is that it is going into one specific area. There is no accountability of who is getting that money. If that money has gone on to contracts for redevelopment of a public asset like Fort Regent the same as we see with Mont Orgueil Castle. I think it was in the region of £7 million to £8 million was spent up there. When you walk around that castle now, it looks like something worth visitors coming to see. I think if you spend the money at Fort Regent and try and gain access to some of those funds you are going to have something for the public of Jersey for the next 20 years that they are going to see as theirs and not just for private development. People want to see it developed. If you look in the report that I did, that was one of the questions: do you want to see the Fort developed? It was at the top of the list, yes, they do want to see it developed. There is no question. That was not the reason why we formed. We are not against development of Fort Regent at all. We want to see it developed but it has got to be developed in the right way and it has got to be developed so that it stays a public asset; not given away to private developers where they make the money from it when that money could be going back into public funds. So if the money can be found within the remit of the States at the moment to stimulate the economy and provide a major building project, which is what Fort Regent would be, and you can do that over the next 4 to 5 years then ... I have spoken to people - general public, friends, colleagues, et cetera - and a lot of them are of that same opinion. But it has got to put forward that contracts go to local companies. All the time we are seeing contracts ... the waterfront was a prime example with housing down there going to a company from outside the Island. There are local tradesmen here that are suffering at the moment in the present downturn and if anything has to be done then we would recommend that the contracts are put out for tender, they go out to local companies and keep as much work in the Island for the Island's economy as possible. We are not against development of Fort Regent. We want to see it developed but it has got to be done in the right way.

Deputy M. Tadier:

But we know that there is a big lobby behind Fort Regent; people who either use it or have friends and family that use it. If they are continually palmed off and - to go back to the phrase I believe Deputy Vallois used - we are going round in circles and if the recession is basically used as another excuse to stop us doing something at Fort Regent, what is the way forward after that from your point of view? What can be done politically? Can there be any lobbying?

Mr. R. Travert:

The only power base can come from the States themselves. The States already passed Projet 181. It is already standing to redevelop it. What has not happened is the funds have not come forward from that. Senator Mike Vibert took that to the States. He had it passed in the States to redevelop Fort Regent but there were no funds available. So the States passed it, majority vote, but the funds were not there. If the funds cannot be found then it should be left as it is. There is no reason to push forward or to give Fort Regent away to a private developer when we have a perfectly good, usable facility at the moment, and again, until the funds can be found. I do not have people coming up to me complaining about Fort Regent. I have people coming up to me and saying: "Went up to the Fort. We had a great concert up there the other night. We went up to the Fort and we saw whatever." That is the feedback that I get from people. Hopefully, as a Scrutiny Panel you are getting that too because I think that the push for anything to be done at Fort Regent has to come from the public themselves, which is why I am very glad that we have had these public meetings now because at least you are going to get a much bigger view than what we were getting at the time where we were sitting in a room with 3 or 4 people and they did not want us to go out there and inform the public of what they wanted to do with Fort Regent. That is what we did. So if the funds cannot be found, it is running perfectly well at the moment. We have got an increase in concerts, et cetera, at the moment which we did in the last meeting then it should be left alone. There is no reason to try and give it away when we have a perfectly good facility that is being absolutely used to its full potential as possibly can at the moment. So I do not see that there is any reason to push it unless the funds are found to be available.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay, thank you. You mentioned earlier, Roy, about town regeneration. One of the arguments that was put forward to us by Property Holdings, who in a way support your view that we should not do anything, but of course they say they cannot do anything because there is no money around. Also, as you know, master plans have become the flavour of the month, so to speak.

Mr. R. Travert:

Yes.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

They want to see a master plan for that area as W.E.B. (Waterfront Enterprise Board) moves along East of Albert and as the EDAW plan gets looked at although as you know the EDAW plan is not in the front of people's minds at the moment. What is your view about that? Do you think we should wait for a master plan to emerge covering that part of town and that part of the waterfront or are there things we can do in the Fort now that will - as the Americans say - get big bangs for your bucks. You can do a fairly small amount of work but get quite a good result.

Mr. R. Travert:

Yes, I think they are doing that already. I think we have seen a good investment in the weight training area with all new flooring. They redid all of the floor within Fort Regent, I think it was probably about 3 or 4 years ago when they relaid the whole entire floor basement. They obviously have some budget. There is new weights equipment up there. They are maintaining the Fort as far as the facilities go inside it. I think they are doing that to the best of their ability there. As far as the master plans for around the low areas and everything, personally I have no objection to them doing any development in these areas. If it is not usable then it should be redeveloped for something that is useful now. The planning offices down where they are at the moment could possibly move to a much more suitable place; more in the centre of town for people to access or to a new place, and then that area will release then for

development for housing because that is going to be a huge issue for the States in the coming years. So it was earmarked for that. So I think that the town regeneration plan they have at the moment to incorporate Fort Regent is the right thing to do because there is a conscious - what is the word I am looking for - acknowledgment that Fort Regent is integral to what is going to happen in town. You cannot have the increase in housing and the increase in population in town which they want through the town regeneration project - to redevelop some of the office blocks into housing developments - without providing the social facilities in town to deal with those people. Fort Regent could provide that, more so than it is at the moment. So if they are going to push down the road of redevelopment, I believe to remove Pier Road car park, I do not agree with that. I believe you need more car parking in town to alleviate a lot of the driving around that people are doing to find a parking space. You do not restrict the amount of parking and then expect people to park. You have to increase parking so people know I can go straight to that place and I can park there. That stops the people driving around town looking for a car parking space. I mean this has been spoken about for years. Fort Regent, the Snow Hill car park idea with the Pier Road with the increase of car parking. You cannot increase population levels and not expect to build the infrastructure and car parking is the infrastructure. Cars are not going to go away because then you end up damaging the car industry that we have seen. So all of it is so interlinked and this is just for Fort Regent. You have to provide all those outlying facilities to go with Fort Regent. I do not think you will have personally any objections to people seeing redevelopment around the harbour area, which I know is being earmarked for development coming around commercial buildings. I think that the whole of that area does need to be developed. I think that it would be good for the economy of the Island to see those areas developed. So long as you include that with your sports facilities which you are going to need. You are not going to be able to remove. Originally the idea was shut Fort Regent, move everybody into a purpose-built facility at Le Rocquier School. That was the original intention at a cost of I think it was £10.odd million. Obviously that was not viable and that is why we started a campaign. You have a facility in the middle of town that is accessible for everybody. You can increase your tax take. You can increase all of these things and develop these outlying areas which I think is the right thing to be doing, absolutely.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

But come from another angle with the experience of the group over the last few years. I know you feel really strongly about not letting a public facility and the 22 acres go into private development but leaving that aside is there one project among all those that have been mooted that you think would be an absolute disaster? I mean there has been talk of developing the old pool site for a church group, all sorts. I am not highlighting that one for any reason. Is there one thing which you think from your experience would be a huge step in the wrong direction? Maybe that is not a fair question.

Mr. R. Travert:

No, I do not think that there are any major things. The idea was just to hand the whole development over for £1 which is absolutely unbelievable to think that a States Member could put that forward to give ... we would not give Mont Orgueil away for £1 or Elizabeth Castle for £1 yet we are talking of a 22 acre site in the middle of town to do that which is a valuable public asset; 22 acres in the middle of St. Helier is a multimillion pound land asset and it should not be given away just like that. What should be done, and I know the idea was put forward about public/private partnerships and this is the thing that has been going around for a long time now. We had it down on the waterfront. The thing that I would put to Scrutiny is that does it work? Do the public/private partnerships that they are putting forward work because what we see down at the waterfront is that it does not work because the public are still paying. If the public are still paying then the public/private partnership did not work. So if you are putting forward that for Fort Regent then the fear is that it does not work at Fort Regent either and the taxpayer is still going to be paying for it. So why change something that is only costing us £500,000 a year now in subsidy, where we are paying Connex £27 million for their contract the last time in subsidy. We are paying them millions and millions of pounds and yet we are looking at something that benefits the health and the population of the Island, £500,000. There is no comparison. So if you are looking at subsidies in public/private partnerships, it has got to be proven to work as far as I am concerned. I would not want to see a public/private partnership unless it was proven that that could work.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Thank you.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I should add, by the way, the £27 million is spread over several years. It is not every year.

Mr. R. Travert:

I know it is over several years. I fully understand that.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Just a more narrow question, Roy. As we know, whenever the good ideas have come up they have all been forgotten about or they have been rejected because of money. This sounds cheap but I have to put it to you. It has been suggested, for example, there is a simple way to improve access is to improve the signage out of the Pier Road car park so people know, particularly visitors they know, and to put more signage from town itself - in the centre of town to the Fort. Another suggestion has been almost what you might call an interim measure but we all know interim measures become permanent measures, a minibus. What do you think of that?

Mr. R. Travert:

I think that has already been tried from Snow Hill to minibus people up to the Fort. I think what you must not lose sight of the fact is that people work all day. Fort Regent is always going to have a busy time after 5.00 p.m. until 9.00 p.m. or 10.00 p.m. when the facility ends. What happens up there during the day is going to be school events, maybe conferences if they are coming over. But as far as the population of the Island is concerned, we all have to work every day. That is 40,000 to 50,000 people all in their jobs, doing their work, picking the kids up from school, et cetera. So a minibus service into town, who is going to use it? That has got to be the question. I would not see that a minibus service coming into town is going to ... they are going to sit there most of the day. If you put them in from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m., that is certainly not going to be peak time. It might work from 5.00 p.m. till 8.00 p.m.

for 3 hours. We had a hop on service going around St. Helier and that did not last, and that was ferrying people around the town centre. So you are looking at an extremely small footfall going up the Fort to be able to use something like that. Access-wise, I think the signage you brought up is a good idea. We notice the big monolith on the hill but a lot of people do not know that. They do not know what it is. That is something that was brought up to me where they say what is that up on the hill there? Then you will say it is a sport ... What else is up there? It is a sports complex. What can we do up there? There is just sport up there. So signage I think for people to get up there is a good idea to improve that definitely. The bus service I do not think is viable.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

What about you, Roy? You have given us a very excellent presentation but are there any other points?

Mr. R. Travert:

No, I think that the majority of people that I speak to want to see Fort Regent developed but it has to be done in the right way. They do not want to see the same mistakes being made at Fort Regent as we have seen down at the waterfront which prompted at the time. The waterfront was an extremely contentious issue when Fort Regent first came up in 2002 about this new idea to just give it away. At the time we saw a lot of projects going out to private developers. When the expression of interest was put out, there were 3 main developers put forward. I believe one of them was Harcourt. So what we did not want to see was a repetition of what we have seen down at the waterfront as happening at Fort Regent. The people of Jersey want to see Fort Regent developed. They want to see it done in the right way and they want to see it stay in the public's hand. We do not want to see it go over to a private developer on a 150 year lease which then it is not ours any more. That has stood there for hundreds of years as a public asset and can be utilised very well in a public/private partnership if it can be found to work. I think the outlying areas, yes, get them developed absolutely. Thank you very much for your time today.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Thank you. I think you have given an excellent and a very clear presentation. Obviously everybody is

very aware of the incredible amount of hard work you put in in those early years on the Fort Users Association.

Mr. R. Travert:

Thank you.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Thank you very much indeed. We will now end the session.

Mr. R. Travert:

Thank you very much.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

You had a document, Roy.

Mr. R. Travert:

Yes, I am going to give that to you now.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

That would be great. Much appreciated.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

We will reconvene at 12.30 p.m. when the Planning Minister will give us the benefit of his wisdom.