

3.3 Connétable C.H. Taylor of St. John of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding work undertaken behind the granite hospital building between 3rd and 7th April 2017: [1(234)]

Will the Minister inform the Assembly what work was being carried behind the granite hospital building between Monday, 3rd April and Friday, 7th April 2017? Will he explain the purpose for which the work was necessary and what the budgeted cost was?

Senator A.K.F. Green (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

I welcome the question from the Constable as it gives me the opportunity to share with the Assembly the good news, the work the Constable mentioned is preparation work for the new M.R.I. (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) scanner which is planned to be operational by the end of this year. Due to ageing infrastructure, drainage issues were encountered and had to be overcome. These drains were underneath where the new scanner is going. The budget for this work was £25,000.

3.3.1 The Connétable of St. John:

I was called to the hospital by a patient who was concerned about the noise that this work was creating and I took a decibel meter there and in Rayner Ward recorded a noise level of 84 decibels. Remembering that the Royal Court found against Reg's Skips, who never produced a noise above 50 decibels, for being a nuisance, would the Minister accept that 84 decibels in a ward is unacceptable?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

What I will accept is that you cannot make an omelette without breaking the eggs. We hit very severe concrete, really thick concrete, and the only way that concrete could be removed was with a rock breaker. But that proves the wisdom of not wanting to renovate this hospital because that sort of problem you would find everywhere as you work your way through. It saves the patients 12 years of that sort of noise.

3.3.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Rather than saving the degree of noise it appears to me that what we are doing is preparing a schedule for more and more noise as we convert the hospital into a decent, new, modern hospital.

The Bailiff:

Is that a question?

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does he not agree?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

No.

3.3.3 Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré of St. Lawrence:

The Minister and his team have consistently stated that noise mitigation measures for building works will be in place. How do readings of 84 decibels on what is effectively a minor piece of work, relatively, give us any confidence that the noise mitigation measures for the new hospital will be acceptable to patients who have experienced that level of noise and vibration for days, if not weeks on end; and also for staff who will potentially have to endure that for years?

[10:00]

Senator A.K.F. Green:

As I said in a previous answer to a question, it proves the wisdom of not renovating this hospital because of those sort of problems. The noise in the new construction, most of which can be anticipated, mitigated and even prevented, for example instead of piling I believe you drill to create piles, it is a lot quieter. The problem in this area, it was a very small area, a few square metres surrounded by walls on all sides and the only way you could break up the concrete, I suppose you could have put dynamite in, but the only logical way of breaking up the concrete was with a rock breaker. But it proves the wisdom, that sort of problem would be found throughout the hospital if we were to try and renovate it.

3.3.4 The Connétable of St. John:

Following the complaint from the patients I travelled around the hospital and even in Plémont Ward, in the furthest possible place from the disturbance, the noise was unacceptable and the patients I spoke to were complaining. Will the Minister apologise to those patients who were in the hospital during that week and undertake to ensure that such noises do not occur in the future?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

Dealing with the last bit of the question first. We can do all we can to mitigate noise but we cannot prevent it. Of course I apologise to patients but it was a short-lived period of time to enable us to put a fantastic new facility in for Islanders.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

I put the question in for the Chief Minister because the Chief Minister has apparently been involved with the R.N.L.I. on hiring matters previously and would it not be more appropriate for him to be dealing with these questions?

The Bailiff:

I was not aware that you had specifically asked the Chief Minister to answer this question.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

When I put a question in for the Chief Minister, with the greatest respect, I expect the Chief Minister to answer it.

The Bailiff:

The custom is that Ministers can request an Assistant Minister to answer for them, unless the Chief Minister wants to answer this question I was going to direct it to Senator Routier.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Presumably then, before we get into questions, we need to alter Standing Orders to require Ministers to say before they ...

The Bailiff:

Senator, that is something to take up with the Chairman of the Privileges and Procedures Committee.