

2.9 Deputy S. Power of St. Brelade of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding the proposed Hydra Terra amphibious vehicle service to Elizabeth Castle:

Would the Minister inform the States whether the proposed Hydra Terra amphibious vehicles for use on the Elizabeth Castle service will be able to operate safely in an open-sea state and will he advise whether the Jersey Heritage Trust has retained a naval architect and marine consultant to assess the stability, survivability and suitability of the proposed vehicles? Can I clarify, Sir, that stability relates to the stability calculations relating to the design of the hull, survivability relates to inclusion of watertight compartments and suitability means the operational suitability?

Senator M.E. Vibert (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

My Assistant Minister with responsibility for culture, the Deputy of Grouville, answered questions on this subject at the last sitting and as she has started I ask that she should be allowed to finish, Sir.

Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville (Assistant Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

The Jersey Heritage Trust has not retained a naval architect or marine consultant to assess the new vehicles which will operate the service to Elizabeth Castle, nor does it have any plan to do so. It is important to appreciate that the suitability and safety of vehicles to operate between West Park and Elizabeth Castle is not assessed by the Jersey Heritage Trust. It is Jersey Harbours which will apply standards set down by the Maritime Coastguard Agency, the M.C.A., in order to issue the necessary licence. To fulfil its contractual requirements with the Jersey Heritage Trust the new operator is obliged to provide vehicles which are fit for purpose. That is to say vehicles which will conform to the licensing requirements in Jersey under M.C.A. regulations. These vehicles satisfy the requirements of the U.S. Coastguard and they satisfy the licensing regimes of all the other locations in which they operate. They will nonetheless be inspected and assessed locally to ensure that they comply with the M.C.A. standards which apply in the United Kingdom and are adopted also in Jersey. To reduce the possibility that there might be a difference in approach between regimes and to ensure that the manufacturer takes full account of the specific requirements of the M.C.A. the production contract for the vehicles specifies that they must be built according to these M.C.A. standards. The Jersey Heritage Trust believes that this approach addresses any reasonable concerns that might exist about specification of the vehicles.

2.9.1 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

I wonder if the Assistant Minister might inform Members as to what progress has been made, if any, in relation to the potential shorter season that we expressed concerns about in the Assembly the last time this was aired and what has been done in respect of perhaps plugging the gap with the old DUKWS or, as was suggested, perhaps looking into accessing the castle from the deepwater side of the facility.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Negotiations are going on at the moment and if the Deputy could appreciate these negotiations are between one private company and another, so I do not want to say too much here because it might jeopardise these in some way. But I believe thus far they have not been desperately positive. So, the new operator has been investigating getting a temporary craft from America to fill the gap.

2.9.2 Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour:

In a previous answer, Sir, the Assistant Minister stated that unless amphibious vehicles are in service the castle will be closed. Can the Assistant Minister confirm whether this is a rough guideline or an absolute rule that Elizabeth Castle will be closed unless amphibious craft are running? Thank you, Sir.

The Deputy of Grouville:

It is not an absolute rule and the Jersey Heritage Trust have taken on board the concerns of the Assembly at the last sitting and they will endeavour to put on pedestrian tours to the castle to fill

the gap, but it has to be remembered that this time of year, the time of year we are talking about, there are many neap tides and the tours will take place at different times each day. The causeway at best is clear for 4 hours so the café at Elizabeth Castle probably will not be open, nor will any living history interpretations be put on. So, Jersey Heritage Trust will not probably charge for entrance to the castle because of this. But Heritage do appreciate that it is more than just the takings, it is opening-up heritage sites to the public, and they more than anyone will endeavour to make sure this happens.

2.9.3 Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Would the Assistant Minister with Heritage consider utilising the pier-to-pier arrangements that are currently in operation for boats coming from Albert Pier to the Elizabeth Castle pier?

The Deputy of Grouville

If the negotiations are not successful and the new operator cannot secure a craft on a temporary basis I am sure the new operator will do everything they can to make sure there is some form of access to the castle and, as I said before, Heritage more than anyone will appreciate that it is a good thing that the castle is open to everyone.

2.9.4 Deputy S. Power:

The Assistant Minister has rightly pointed out that the U.S. Coastguard regulations in relation to the operation of passenger boats is different from M.C.A - Marine and Coastguard Agency. In actual fact I think the Marine and Coastguard Agency regulations are stricter than U.S. Coastguard regulations. Does the Assistant Minister not think that the prospective operators of the new service should submit stability data and survivability data to the M.C.A. in advance of the vessels arriving from the United States?

The Deputy of Grouville:

The new operator has engaged the services of an independent international surveyor to assist with ensuring that the vehicles are M.C.A. compliant. It might also be worth noting that the vehicles chosen by the operator are in use in many locations around the world including U.S.A., Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Japan, New Zealand and the Caribbean. The manufacturers currently have 38 in operation, 36 of which operate in salt water. So, we have no reason to believe that they are not fit for purpose.