

HOSPITAL FUNDING – A PERSONAL VIEW

1. For the purposes of this contribution I will not dwell on the fact that I consider Overdale to be a totally inappropriate site for the new hospital, arrived at by a flawed process, delivering a site which did not meet the stated necessary criteria agreed beforehand. All very suspicious!
2. It is IMPOSSIBLE for members of the public to assess whether or not the proposed cost represents value for money, simply because they do not know what they are getting for this eye-watering amount. We know about the car-park, the atrium, the power house and the rest area, but not how many beds, how many wards, an equivalent of the valued Samares Ward, and whether there will be more services than now, or less which would put further dependency on English hospitals and local GPs. The sooner this is made clear the better.
3. As far as the proposed sum being appropriate for an Island of this size, very clearly it is not! For a population less than half that of Bournemouth it appears absurd. Our only judgment can be against the many hospitals that have been, and are being, built in England in recent years and currently, all of which have been well below our budget, even as low as 25%, yet in most cases serving many more people spread over a much wider area. This cannot be right.
4. One of the problems facing thinking members of the public is that the whole project was delivered back-to-front. We started off with an estimated £400M +, before a site was chosen, before the requirement in the hospital was discussed and agreed, before plans were drawn and before tenders were invited. Try doing that at home. It is the equivalent of telling a builder you have £10k, asking if he could build a shed for that amount, and getting a reply that he could do it for £20K knowing full well that it would actually cost less than £2K. I am staggered that those States Members with at least some business acumen have not raised the roof!!
5. As far as the proposal to issue public bonds is concerned, that may well work, but not, I think, if they were very long-term. This expenditure comes at a time when there are other major projects in train, that the finance industry is approaching a state of flux, and there has been no mention of how to fill the financial hole due to loss of fuel tax when we are all forced to drive electric vehicles. This latter, by my uninformed guess, amounts to about £70M a year, which over the suggested 40 year repayment period would be an additional £3 billion approximately. Any ideas on that one? If the alternative is to increase Income Tax, bearing in mind that only about 40,000 residents actually pay income tax, that will mean that over time each will we asked for £25,000 to pay for the hospital. I suggest that will go down like a lead balloon.
6. Before any consideration is given to the mathematics of how the Island raises £1 billion for the New Hospital I strongly suggest that some estimates are acquired for the same building to be built on one of the available “empty” sites, already owned by the States. Sites that would require no compulsory purchase, no loss of agricultural fields, no new highways, no loss of town parking, no need to re-locate a bowls club, no need to transform the former Les Quennevais School into a temporary Overdale, no loss of all the current services which could continue undisturbed until the new hospital is built and ready for handover. To my knowledge no such comparison have been made, but common sense says they should have been.

I submit this in good faith for consideration by the Scrutiny panel.

Yours sincerely

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