

STATES OF JERSEY

Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel Fort Regent Review

FRIDAY, 22nd MAY 2009

Panel:

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour (Chairman)
Connétable G.F. Butcher of St. John
Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade
Deputy T.A. Vallois of St. Saviour
Mr. I. Barclay (Panel Adviser)
Mrs. E. Liddiard (Scrutiny Officer)

Witnesses:

Deputy J.G. Reed of St. Ouen (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture)
Mr. D. de la Haye (Assistant Director, Education, Sport and Culture)
Ms. A. Boucheré (Fort Regent Management)
Mr. D. Bisson (Head of Operations, Sport Division of Education, Sport and Culture)

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

I would like to welcome you here to this session of the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel. So, before we get into the substance of the meeting we will introduce ourselves. I am Roy Le Hérissier, Deputy of St. Saviour, Chairman of the Panel.

Connétable G.F. Butcher of St. John:

Constable Graeme Butcher from St. John.

Deputy T.A. Vallois of St. Saviour:

Deputy Tracey Vallois, St. Saviour.

Mr. I. Barclay:

Ian Barclay from Torkildson Barclay, the Panel Adviser.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Would you like to give a bit of background?

Mr. I. Barclay:

Yes. We advise all sports, arts, heritage, leisure planning across the U.K. (United Kingdom). We are not complete strangers to Jersey. I think we did your swimming strategy about 10 years ago.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Thank you.

Ms. A. Boucheré (Fort Regent Management):

Angie Boucheré, Manager at Fort Regent.

Deputy J. G. Reed of St. Ouen (The Minister for Sport, Education and Culture):

Deputy James Reed, Minister for Education, Sport and Culture.

Mr. D. de la Haye (Assistant Director, Education, Sport and Culture)

Derek de la Haye, Assistant Director, Education, Sport and Culture.

Mr. D. Bisson (Head of Operations, Sports Division, Education, Sport and Culture):

David Bisson, Head of Operations of the Sport Division, Education, Sport and Culture.

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

Deputy Montfort Tadier of St. Brelade.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Thank you; and Elizabeth.

Mrs. E. Liddiard (Scrutiny Officer):

Elizabeth Liddiard, Scrutiny Officer.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay; and Linda is doing the recording. Thank you. Okay. We have got a series of questions that we will be working through which you have seen, obviously; and as you can see, a lot overlap with each other, and we will be coming in on supplementaries. But the intention is to finish comfortably by 4.00 p.m. If there are any other issues like if, for example, it becomes obvious that we need more time or that there is more information needed, either we will send a letter or we will ask for another meeting. But as with this morning when we met the Treasury Assistant Minister and the Property Holdings people, I suppose we are getting to grips with the broad issues with you, and then, as I said, we may need to dig more deeply. So, let me kick it off, and we will ask the Minister, who may or may not, to delegate some of his answers. Would the Minister outline the Education, Sport and Culture Department's remit and responsibility for Fort Regent?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I thought I might just give a brief overview, and then perhaps one of my officers might add some flesh to the bones, as it were. So, with regard the department, it is responsible clearly for the administration of Fort Regent complex, and the Sport and Leisure Division which is part of the department manages the Fort within the budget agreed by the department. The Sports and Leisure Division is responsible for the programming of all the activities that take place at the Fort and for internal maintenance of the buildings as well as maintenance for the external areas.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay. Thank you.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

David, would you like to add anything to that?

Mr. D. Bisson:

No. I think that is a good summary, Minister.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Is it a remit of responsibility, Mr. Minister, would you say, that is totally clear? You do not have any sort of disputes with other government departments? There is no ambiguity to ...?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

To my knowledge, I believe that it is reasonably clear, and clearly it is a work in progress as well. The relationship between Property Holdings and my department in a number of areas, as well as other departments, needs to be, I believe, more clearly defined. However, agreements are in place, and at present we meet and the agreements are laid down between the 2 departments as required.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Thank you. Well, that in fact does bring us to question 2, so I will ask Constable Butcher.

The Connétable of St. John:

Could the Minister brief the Panel about the department's relationship with Property Holdings?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Yes. The department operates under a Service Level Agreement with Property Holdings, which details the responsibilities of both the landlord and the tenant, which in this case is the Sport and Leisure Division of my department; annual building maintenance requests for the Fort are submitted by the Sports and Leisure Division to Property Holdings and a schedule of works is then drawn up by Property Holdings department itself. It should be noted that at present some landlord-related works are undertaken by the Sports and Leisure technical team in agreement with Property Holdings. But David clearly has more of a working relationship, should I say, with Property Holdings, and perhaps you would like to add more of the detail?

Mr. D. Bisson:

What generally happens is, I will meet annually with Brian Smith - I cannot remember what his title is - who heads up the Property Holdings area which is responsible for the Sport and Leisure Division and Fort Regent. We go through the Service Level Agreement to make sure we are happy with the contents on an annual basis, and that Service Level Agreement is then put forward, and that is what we work to for the year. It outlines the landlord and the tenant responsibilities, so we are quite clear what our roles are within that Service Level Agreement. The other side of that is looking at work that needs to be done on the building over a period of time. So, we also submit through the managers, a schedule of works for work that we think needs to be undertaken and which is the responsibility of the landlord every year. That is then documented, and we have that schedule sent to us annually, so we are quite clear about the requests that have gone in; and then Property Holdings will come back and determine what works they can afford to carry out in relation to that schedule. Generally, the works they carry out are what we call the legal requirements. Beyond that it has been very difficult for them to fund anything else for improvements or other works within the building.

The Connétable of St. John:

Certainly, this morning it came over fairly loud and clear from Property Holdings that there were fairly major budgetary constraints with them in terms of maintenance that they should be looking after; and also that certain fundings areas, a lot of the exterior outside of the rotunda area certainly does not, shall we say, meet with the public's expectations. It is pretty run down, a lot of the area. Are you saying that they do not fulfil their obligations, or that they cut it as close to the bone as they possibly can?

Mr. D. Bisson:

I would not say they do not fulfil. I think the problem here is that they are obviously restricted with the funding they have available to meet the number of requests we do, and they do determine the requests in the sense that, you know what is desirable, what is essential. I am sure they would like to meet all the

requests but the funding that they have at the moment is just not sufficient to deal with those requests. So, the problem we are coming up against is that the building is getting worse rather than getting better. We try and keep the internal of the building in a good condition because the customers expect that, and we are here going to meet our customers' expectations. But the exterior of the building and other areas like the roads that are leading up to it are in a poor condition, and yet we are not able to get Property Holdings to meet those changes.

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

Do you have an average figure of the backlog of maintenance that could be done, do you know that yourselves?

Mr. D. Bisson:

It runs into tens of thousands of pounds. Considerable amounts of money will be needed to carry out a lot of the repairs that we want done. What we try and do over a period of time is to even invest ourselves in some areas which may be regarded as landlord, but we are so keen to get these things to a reasonable condition that we have invested some of the over-achievement of income or the minor capital elements that we get to undertake some of those works to maintain it in a reasonable condition.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

It is true to say that the department does benefit from all the income generated from the facilities provided, and so I can understand why we might choose to support certain minor improvements to ensure that the facilities are kept to a certain standard which meets the expectations of the users.

Mr. D. de la Haye:

Just to add one bit to that, David mentioned the minor capital vote. We have traditionally received an amount - an allocation in the annual revenue budgets in minor capital - to support just that: minor capital developments. That is across the whole of the Sport and Leisure Division. That, over recent years, has been reduced, but nevertheless we have maintained a level of £100,000 and clearly we believe that that money is best invested in where the customer is being. So, we use it for flooring, for internal changing rooms, those kind of aspects that really are going to have an impact on the customers who are visiting the facilities. That £100,000 goes beyond Fort Regent, it must be clear - it is all the Sport and Leisure facilities, but clearly Fort Regent does benefit from some of that.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

So, do you put in a request for monies for the external fabric of the Fort and the road system insofar as it is owned by Property Services or Property Holdings?

Mr. D. Bisson:

Yes. That will be part of the request we put forward for Fort Regent on an annual basis and will be added to the schedule of works that we put across.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Do they assess them as either being urgent or nice to have or ...?

Mr. D. Bisson:

Yes. I mean, obviously, what they do with their money is really down to them. All we can do is make the requests. For the requests, we do try to emphasise the urgency in some cases of the requests and ask if they can be prioritised, and that is really as far as we can go; and then the final decision has to rest with them. If we really get stuck then we will go to Derek or the Minister.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

In defence of Property Holdings, clearly we are all aware that following the transfer of all the property to Property Holdings, funding issues were identified that still have yet to be addressed, and it is not just an issue for my department, it is through all the States. I think we all need to be mindful of that.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Do you know off the top of your head how much money you transferred to them in order to look after the maintenance? Did you transfer ...?

Mr. D. Bisson:

We transferred a sum of £350,000 to the Property Maintenance Division of ESC when the then Sport and Recreation Committee merged with ESC for the maintenance works and all the landlord-related works at that time. Again, bearing in mind that £350,000 was for the whole of the Sport Division estate, and not just for the Fort Regent aspect of it.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

That is a recurring budget item.

Mr. D. Bisson:

Yes.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Good. I am sure we are going to go back to this issue, because the issue of your role and Property Holdings is obviously absolutely key to the development of the Fort. So, we will go to the third question. Tracey.

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

Could the Minister give details of key elements that they think are working well at the Fort, i.e. active card scheme, and their key issues?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Well, key elements which in my opinion are working well, and I am sure are being confirmed by many of the users, and if you do not mind I will try and list them. They are the active club membership; the health and fitness facilities, including the junior gym; obviously the fitness classes; the facilities provided for many of the clubs and associations that are based at the Fort and major sporting and social events including conferences and concerts. Certainly we have recorded a dramatic improvement in the income that is being generated and the interest that is being shown in the area of those concerts being held at the Fort. Equally, we should be aware that there is provision for disadvantaged groups and those with special needs within the complex, and perhaps not particularly related to fitness, we have facilities for the Jersey Instrumental Services that are provided within the Fort to enable them to operate and benefit from. Perhaps last but not least, we have a pre-school facility on the premises which hopefully meets some of the needs of our community. Regarding the main issues, as we have already discussed and I am sure you are aware, we have got a need to pay attention to the upgrading of the existing facilities, including the possibility of the redevelopment of certain areas in and around the building. You have already visited the premises and you have seen for yourself there are many areas on the large site that could be better utilised by all concerned, and we would like to see that happen. Specifically we have the pool site, cable car station and other areas that in the past were used to provide various entertainment type facilities which are no longer utilised as such. Equally, I think there is opportunity as we improve - and again it is a top priority to improve the access from St. Helier, I am talking of what I call the Snow Hill area - to allow people in their lunch hours and after work, and the actual residents themselves, to enjoy and use facilities and areas that are contained within the complex.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Minister, you said that it is top priority to work on access from Snow Hill. In real terms, how is that manifesting itself as a priority?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Well, I think that I personally have been promoting the idea that an opportunity exists, or an option is, that the development of the existing Snow Hill car park into a multi-storey car park might be a way of not only providing parking for that area of town, but equally allowing us to access the Fort via a lift system, because if you had a multi-storey car park clearly you need a lift, and so the 2 could be combined. Finances, I know, are available at present to fund a new multi-storey car park. Discussions have been taking place regarding the redevelopment of Ann Court and I promoted the fact that Snow Hill could be considered as an alternative for that particular development.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Okay. When you talk about the issues and the successful programmes, one of the things we were trying to determine from Property Services, who were very married to the idea of a master plan but a master plan taking in most of East of Albert - a very broad strategic master plan, they were very married to that. Are there any items you could bring into being with a reasonably small amount of money, but if you had that money it would enable you to really start expanding the programme offering to the Fort?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

The short answer in my view is no.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can I ask if he has received permission to take photos, has he submitted 3 days' notice?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

No. It is a different arrangement.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Is that correct?

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Carry on.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

The short answer is no. I think piecemeal type projects do not work. I do think that the area in question, if we are talking about sort of Havre des Pas to Snow Hill, can be divided up and opportunities should be explored to perhaps take advantage of partnership agreements with the private sector - commercial involvement - to kick-start a development or the improvement or redevelopment of the Fort. Clearly it is a long-term project, and I do not think anyone is pretending that it would not be. But I do believe that things like, as I say, a multi-storey car park in the Snow Hill area, or I know that an opportunity or an option is being considered regarding the creation of a hotel linked to the Fort utilising the pool site as a commercial partnership type arrangement that might, depending on the design detail of the proposal in the form of the hotel, enhance the existing the facility.

The Connétable of St. John:

Obviously you seem quite strong on the car park idea. Have you done any feasibility studies? We definitely got the impression this morning that feasibility seemed to be an issue in terms of what you can create in the way of parking and funding, et cetera. Have you looked at it as a department?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Personally, no. I have, as I say, spoken to the relevant department and put forward the suggestions. There have, and I am sure my officers will add to the detail, been a number of reports carried out on the Fort, and I am sad to say I have not read them all yet. But ...

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

Can I just come in on that point, with regards to the reports. I put it to Property Services this morning, who were talking about master plan feasibility studies, and made the very valid point that there was done in 2000, and we have not seen anything come out of that. Now they are talking about: "This is the first step that we have got to take is doing a master plan before we can start doing any piecemeal work or anything like that. We need to do a master plan so we know where we are going." Now, if we do the master plan - because apparently it is going to cost a lot of money which we do not have, but it will come under different departments - how do we know that anything is going to come out of that one? It feels like a kind of a diversion in a way.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I think the first thing that we need to be aware of is that there are 2 issues here. When they speak of master plans, we have a Planning Department who is very keen to consider the big picture in a number of different areas within St. Helier to ensure that the development proposals and the plans all fit together. There is a question that you should ask, quite rightly, the Planning Department; EDAW have carried out a feasibility study on the Fort and are I believe still involved. But I think this is where I maybe will pass this on to my officers to add some more detail.

Mr. D. de la Haye:

I think if I go back a stage, the question that I think you have asked is "How is there some certainty?" My understanding of it is that the last report that you referred to, in 2000, the *R.Q.A. (Roger Quinton Associates) Report* which was looking at it, it was something that went to the States of course. The States agreed to the principles but of course did not come up with the funding, and this is obviously the block in these things. My experience of the Fort is that I think there were some ad hoc developments that went on over a number of years, and some of those are extremely good, but not necessarily were they always connected. There were a huge range of activities that were going on at Fort Regent, and I am sure they were extremely well intentioned, but the result of that was that we were running an extremely expensive facility, in my opinion not meeting the needs of the customer. We did not do anything very well for lots of people. That is my opinion. I think what we do now is we have reduced the number of activities that we provide but it is far more focused, and it is much better placed in terms of where we are trying to aim at certain groups of people, and I believe are doing a better job in servicing those needs. Any future development must be focused and must be clear about what it is trying to do, because it is essential that the developments complement each other so that we know what we are doing. We cannot be asked to do too many things, and it must be focused. So, I think that that is what would be described as having a plan, a master plan, for it. Certainly, as an officer it would be difficult if we were asked to do lots of varied things. We must be clear about what we are trying to do, and I think that is what the focus is.

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

I completely agree, but my point from speaking to Property Holdings this morning, they want to do a master plan of the whole area which is a brilliant idea. Then we can see where we are going and what we can do with the area which probably would benefit everyone. But your remit is within Fort Regent area itself. Now, obviously, you really cannot do anything until the master plan is done and they know whether they are going to put a hotel there, or this is going to happen. It is difficult for you to make anything out of the area for the public until that is done. So, my question going to Property Services this morning was: "When is this master plan going to be done?"

Mr. D. de la Haye:

I am not sure what answer they gave. My understanding is that Fort Regent was considered as part of the *EDAW Report* which was looking at the East of Albert. We do not sit on that group, but my understanding is that when they looked at that, they identified Fort Regent as being a huge important component part of that, and decided to ask Property Holdings to conduct some work around that particular issue and to focus on that and decide what went on in there; and I believe that that is what they are currently doing. I do not have a problem if they come up with a plan for Fort Regent and look at the opportunities that may exist around it. So, whether it is Snow Hill or whether it is the swimming pool site or the cable car site, I think that is focused around Fort Regent and I think that is okay. But it is about that plan moving forward. Clearly there is an issue about finance, and there seems to be a bit of a block now. In order to get a plan around those particular issues, some funding needs to be released in order to do that, and that, I think, is where we are.

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

They were also stating that the general consensus as well for something to go at Fort Regent is a big issue. I pulled them back to the point in the 1970s when they put the swimming pool up there. That was a bit of an issue, but everyone has benefited from it over the years. Now someone is going to have to make some difficult decisions, but it seems as if we are going round in circles all the time. At least just trying to get an answer out of people. We never got an answer from Property Services as to when the master plan is going to be done. I think it is a very important issue, and if it needs funding and all the departments need to go into that area, then at least talk should be taking place.

Mr. D. Bisson:

This is nothing new. Fort Regent has been in this cycle and circle for a number of years. I have been involved for 10 years now, and since I have been involved we have been involved in a cycle of feasibility studies, redevelopment and now the *EDAW Report* has come along and we recognise that Fort Regent needs to be considered within that plan. But of course, the future redevelopment then seems to be delayed again because it forms part of another master plan, so where do we go from here? It is very difficult. I mean, the key from the *EDAW Report* really was about access to Fort Regent. That was one of the key things they recommended within their report. Now, that should happen; whether the *EDAW Report* goes ahead or does not, access is a key issue for Fort Regent.

Mr. D. de la Haye:

Just to clarify, not the *EDAW Report*, the *R.Q.A. Report* you are referring to, David. The 2000 report.

Mr. D. Bisson:

The *EDAW Report* also highlighted on access as well as being one of the key things, because it spoke about access also from the harbour point of view.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Just completing Tracey's question and then we will move to number 4. I mean, it begs the issue which we were looking at this morning and, as Tracey said, we never quite got the answer. Who, in the broadest sense, is responsible for driving Fort Regent forward?

Mr. D. de la Haye:

The landlord.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

The landlord.

Mr. D. de la Haye:

It must be.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay.

Mr. D. de la Haye:

We as the tenant are unable to provide the funding to develop a facility under new ... Previously the Sport, Leisure and Recreation Committee drove a proposition which got to the States which was agreed, but the funding was not forthcoming. So, at that time that was my understanding of the situation. Now, as I understand it, we are merely a tenant in Fort Regent, and it is the landlord's responsibility, and that is Property Holdings. Clearly we need to work with them. It has got to be a partnership. But that is where we are at the moment.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

The one thing that we need to be clear about is that although we have the landlord-tenant relationship ultimately we are talking about 2 States departments, with hopefully similar aims; and I think this is where it would be too easy to just say it is Property Holdings' responsibility and it is not ours. There is a collective responsibility that we need to make sure that Fort Regent's future is secured, and it is going to require the efforts of both departments and others - and the State as a whole - to develop and enable this future development of the Fort to happen.

Mr. D. Bisson:

While we talk about Property Holdings and a sharing of responsibility, the ultimate responsibility for the future development or what happens is at a political level. At the end of the day, the decision has to come ... with the advice you are given, needs to be politically driven, and that I think is where there has been an absence over the last few years. The reports have gone in, things have been said, but there has not been the political will to bring it about.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I am sure we are going to keep returning to that question. If we can move, because I know Mountfort has got to go soon, if we can move to question 4?

Deputy M. Tadier

We all know that one of the positive areas - an area which we think is successful - is to do with concerts, and they are often are fully booked out. One area of concern that the Panel has is that there is not any kind of online way to book a ticket. So could you, Minister, please explain perhaps what plans are in the process or if there are any plans to develop an on-line management system to handle on-line bookings for concerts; and also whether there is a way it could be used for general data usage so that we know who is going up to Fort Regent?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

If you do not mind, this is detailed information that I have not been directly involved with, I would like to ask Derek de la Haye to answer the question.

Mr. D. de la Haye:

Well, I will start. It is a concern that we have had. Clearly, we have had a desire to have on-line bookings for a number of months if not years now. I am pleased to say that there is a lot of progress being made in that direction, and even as we speak there is a working group that is working with the States Central I.T. (Information Technology) Department and our own I.T. department, obviously supported by officers from the Sport and Leisure Division. That group is very hopeful that we will have

on-line bookings by the end of this year. That is the time scale they are working to. There has been some debate about whether that should be just on-line bookings for Fort Regent and the concerts that take place there or, indeed, whether they should incorporate the other areas of culture such as the Opera House and the Art Centre, and it looks as if that is the line that they are going to go down at the moment. So, they are going to try and incorporate all those 3 areas together, which obviously does make sense. But clearly we need them to have control over that so that we are able to be in control of our own bookings in that respect. So, while stagnant for quite some time, I am very hopeful, in fact I would almost go as far as confident, that we are going to have something online by the end of the year.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Good, that is useful. The second part of the question that I think is a slightly different issue, we know that we were given figures about how many people use Fort Regent, but it would be very interesting to know the breakdown of that, what people are going there for. Is there any easy way that could be somehow incorporated into an online centralised system? Do you know who is going up to Fort Regent and why?

Mr. D. Bisson:

I am not saying it cannot be, we have management information systems in place which record data. To get specific data out is always slightly more difficult. I mean, you know, the general usage and the visitor numbers are recorded simply by a photoelectric cell recording the visits coming in, but that gives us a trend over a number of years and gives us a good indication of the number of people coming in, although Derek would argue there is more than that because we do not capture every entrance as people come in. If you want more specific data relating to how many people use the squash court, how many people use the badminton court, that is more difficult to break down, largely because the active members come in and they will swipe a card for the gym so that information is more readily available, but they will not necessarily swipe a card when they use a squash court or a badminton court, et cetera. The only way to then ... you know, if we are moving to the next stage again beyond the online concert bookings is to look about online booking for sports facilities as well. But that is something I think which is in the future again.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I think that there are opportunities, in some respects one is quite pleased that this is in development because one of the areas that I want to try and promote is the events type website, that captures events happening whether it is sport or culture, to be honest, and whether it is the opera house, Fort Regent and elsewhere. I think that with the focus now being given to this will enable us to provide a much better website that will provide what locals and visitors require in this modern day.

The Connétable of St. John:

Can I just ask on the systems point of view, are you able to buy something off the shelf or have you got to write something specific for that?

Mr. D. de la Haye:

I am not sure we have got any technical people here. There is an opinion that you can ... we could get a relatively simple system and just go online ourselves. But clearly we have got to work within the States system and all of the policies that they have and the I.T. departments have. So we are working with them. It is a bit of a technical issue which they are going through at this stage. I think what they are trying to do at the moment is to see the current booking systems that we have, and I believe are different in the opera house and are different at the art centre, can be compatible so that they work with one online booking system. I am not sure if I have explained that very well, but it is ...

The Connétable of St. John:

No, I understand what you are ...

Mr. D. de la Haye:

... as far as my techno-knowledge goes. So they are looking ...

The Connétable of St. John:

They need to talk to each other.

Mr. D. de la Haye:

But they are looking at all options and obviously what we need to do and we are very keen to do is to make sure whichever system we have is reliable because as soon as you go down an I.T. route, as I am sure most companies going down I.T. routes perhaps have experienced, it is essential to give a good service, that you get it right.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Will you be attached to the States website or will you have a different server?

Mr. D. de la Haye:

I think it is likely that they will be coming through the States website, but I think that that is a final decision to be made. I do not know if you know any different.

Mr. D. Bisson:

I think the plan at the moment is that you can access through the States website but to be hosted outside of the States website. So I think there is a company at the moment that they are looking to host the online bookings but you will have accessibility through the States website. That it always becomes a problem because one of the great difficulties with the States website and their great concern - and rightly so - is security issues and so this great firewall is built up. So I think that is where some of the issues of how you get over those problems are the ones that need to be sort of looked at. But I am, like Derek, very confident. Recent information has given me a lot more confidence in online bookings being something which is a far higher priority now and something which hopefully we will develop in the near future.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Mr. Chairman, I would just like to excuse myself from the meeting.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I think just to add, though, the opportunity exists for us to really have something that will meet the expectations of people and will benefit everybody. I think that that is our focus.

Mr. D. de la Haye:

I think that is right, you picked up some issues, I know and we picked up some issues at the beginning of the year simply because we had so many events that were so popular and inevitably that did cause one or 2 issues about the capacity that we had in order to take those bookings and service for customers as well as we would like to do. Obviously, if we are online, not only are we going to provide better service, but equally we are going to get better information, more information out to people and make it more

accessible for people to book, whether they live in Jersey or indeed if they live somewhere else and are visiting Jersey.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay. Thank you, Derek. We will move on to a heritage question from Graeme.

The Connétable of St. John:

I shall pass that to the Minister. Does the department feel that it is managing the balance between leisure and heritage aspects of the Fort?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

The short answer is I think it is difficult to achieve and I am not saying that we perhaps have got it exactly right. We are aware a conservation study has been undertaken and, I believe, acted upon. We do work to a limited extent with Jersey Heritage in ensuring that certain elements and recognition of site is as a historic site. But clearly it also is a site that is of regular use for the community and designed for community use. So there is, I suppose one could argue, a tension between the 2. I am not suggesting that that tension is necessarily a problem, but I think there are opportunities again that present themselves as we look to benefit from the elements that already exist within the site. The outside areas, for argument's sake, the ramparts, the views, the opportunities to walk around and make use of the areas of the Fort, could be enhanced and improved. But I think that in summary, I suppose, all I would say is that I do think that perhaps more attention needs to be given to how we can maintain and recognise the historic value of this site as well as continuing to provide a facility that the community can make best use of.

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

With Heritage, it is under your remit as Education, Sport and Culture, with the heritage side of Fort Regent being on the outside, I mean, anything that you would want to take advantage of outside would have to go through Property Holdings as well. Would they have a say-so in everything that happens with regards to that as well?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Property Holdings, I will just pick up and if I get it wrong, please pitch in. Property Holdings is responsible for all cultural estate because that is part of the States property portfolio which was transferred. However, with our heritage sites there are checks and balances to ensure that these areas are properly regarded as sites of importance. My concern and it is a practical concern, is that in recent months it has been drawn to my attention that again and we come back to lack of funding, that the Jersey Heritage Trust is struggling to maintain existing sites and develop and promote heritage sites. I think what I am saying is, again, there needs to be a balance. So, yes, I want to recognise the historic relevance of the Fort. I do not believe that necessarily needs to be, or could even be, an overriding element to further development, recognising that we have some major heritage sites on the Island that we are presently finding it difficult to maintain.

Mr. D. Bisson:

I think the leisure aspects at the Fort at the moment are supporting the heritage site. Take the leisure away from Fort Regent, it is going to be a site which I believe would almost be derelict. What we are doing at least ... we are almost custodians within there because we respect the building, we respect the architectural side and the heritage side of the building, but we are able to at least maintain it to a degree and a level which is acceptable. So I think there is a complementary aspect between the leisure being there and the heritage side as well.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

One last point, sorry, I am getting flashes of inspiration here.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Be careful, it is Friday afternoon.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

How can I answer that. One of the opportunities that I would like to further develop is the idea of a cultural trail. We are very fortunate as an Island to have many cultural and heritage, important heritage sites, around the Island and most importantly in St. Helier itself. I think again you need the access. But clearly with improved access that idea, which is already being promoted, I think Blue Badge Guides are conducting certain tours around St. Helier and parts of St. Helier, I think that could be developed. Again, help enhance and promote the Fort for what it is. Not only, as I say, as the heritage site but equally lead people to enjoy other facilities that can be provided or are provided, shall I say, on the premises.

Mr. D. de la Haye:

I would agree with that and I think that if you stand back and watch some of the visitors to Fort Regent, whether they are visitors to the Island or indeed ... or visitors to the Island who may be sports people or coming for concerts, it is interesting to watch how they go round Fort Regent and look at some of the artefacts there and begin to look at some of the plaques on the wall. So, in support of what David said, I think it is at the moment being kept alive by that. So I support the Minister, I think there is a huge opportunity to develop those aspects even more. We do, of course, still keep the signal station open which I understand is the oldest one in the British Isles. I know that it is not just us that keep it open, it is a partnership with Jersey Heritage. Again, that is an example, I think, of maintaining the heritage really.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

One of the issues we discussed with Property Holdings was, and the Minister knows that I have got a slight interest in it, was there any way of, with the existing sports and leisure obviously staying, opening up heritage more without going into vast expenditure, but tidying it up, setting up a footpath? The things you have of course, reopening maybe little open air cafes on the top or one on the top, maybe running a minibus. In other words, not massive capital investment, which is what was seen as the obstacle this morning. Is there any way that the heritage could be opened up at a fairly modest cost?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Can I pick that up first? I hear exactly what you are saying and I would love to be able to say yes, but again we come back to what I would term the piecemeal approach. If we are going to spend money, let us identify what we want and then let us plan to provide the facilities. Access again, and I will underline it, is absolutely the key. Once we can get improved access and it needs to be pedestrian type access, whether it is a lift or whatever, if we can get people to the site, then it will open up the opportunities. Then I think that again the external areas of the Fort can be properly utilise and enhanced to draw out and identify the heritage aspects of the Fort without necessarily impacting on the overall use.

Mr. D. Bisson:

I would agree with the Minister. I mean we could go round and we could restore some of the plaques and some of the information boards around the ramparts and the amphitheatre, but there is little point in doing that unless you have got a means of getting people up there easily and quickly. The 2 are linked, there is no doubt about that.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

When you say "getting people up", do you mean up from town or up within the Fort?

Mr. D. Bisson:

Improved access from town.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

From town?

Mr. D. Bisson:

Yes. You know, I mean, to me that has to be the key.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay. Okay, we will, I am sure ... I mean, we are going to come back to heritage and we have got the Trust next week in any case. So we will go to Tracey with another question.

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

What improvements does the department plan to make with regards to advertising the Fort, especially the events that are held there, perhaps its own specific website?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I think we have already touched on perhaps what I believe to be the key to this, and it is an access of its events, events website, that really does promote what is happening up there, makes it easy for people to know, tourists and locals alike. I think today's tourist or visitor, should I say, who is looking for an experience, likes to book their flights, look at their hotel and equally understand what is going on. I think we are pretty poor at the moment in identifying what is happening on this Island. Huge amounts are. Certainly, I am well aware, not only of the sort of sports areas where international and national tournaments and other events are being held on a regular basis, but equally the cultural side of things. I think that they are the same, pulling the 2 together and having an events type of website will just open up the doors to increased opportunities for us, as I say, enhance not only the cultural experience that we all recognise and enjoy, but also to benefit the Island as a whole, increased tourist activity, visitor performance and so on and so forth.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

We are coming to joint advertising next which Montfort can deal with, but before we do, are there things that you and your managers would like to be doing in terms of advertising, which, with a little bit of money, not a fantabulous fortune, could really help you? In other words, a little bit of money for a good and maybe a medium result. Are there things you would like to be doing that at the moment you are not doing?

Mr. D. Bisson:

I think it is important just to recognise that we do advertise the Fort; it is not completely unadvertised. I mean, there is a page on the website, www.gov site, which gives a lot of information about the Fort, the events that go on there and we have recently introduced the Facebook page for the younger audience to try and encourage them to, you know, view, that and we do other things like poster sites around the town advertising, the radio promotions include the Fort, so there is quite a lot happening, but of course the more you can promote something the more interest you will generate and the fact of the matter is the Fort Regent page within the gov site is 2 or 3, you know, steps back so it is not there, it is not prominent. I would like to see something more prominent on the www.gov site, maybe the events more prominent on the front page because it is a key thing for the Island, something like that.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Do you think a freestanding ... it is back to the question we asked about internet booking. Do you really

feel a government website is the way to go for ...

Mr. D. Bisson:

If you ask me personally, no. I argued strongly with the Active brand when issued the active brand that we should remain outside of that because we wanted to see ourselves as a..... you know, we are a commercial operation and unfortunately once you go through a government website, the commercial aspects are sort of buried in lots of other information. I mean, to me, you know, we are operating in a commercial way in a number of areas, let us move away from the government restrictions that we have and let us see if we can open them up through other means. So I am personally greatly in favour of that.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Personally, Mr. Chairman, I think it would be logical and I do not know why it has not happened yet, just to register FortRegent.je and you could have that linked to the States website so you just click on a link and it takes you to it; an external freestanding site.

Mr. D. de la Haye:

Because we are working within the States policy at the moment and we work through the States government website.

Deputy M. Tadier:

It is the red tape in other words.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I take your point and I think it is something that ...

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I cannot imagine people randomly going to gov.je in the hope that they will see facilities that will be leisure and entertainment. I just cannot imagine it.

Mr. D. Bisson:

The other benefits of moving outside you can start getting advertisement on your site. You can start getting money in to pay for the site and all the other issues, you know, relating to it, so ...

Male Speaker:

It is States I.T. policy, is it, that is stopping you?

Mr. D. de la Haye:

Yes. But we are hopeful that the new relaunched website, which I understand will be sometime in your autumn, certainly before the end of the year, will provide more opportunities. But at the moment we are working within policy.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Okay.

The Connétable of St. John:

Can I ask you, within that policy, why you are being told that it has got to be within States policy? Is it security? Is it ...

Mr. D. de la Haye:

My understanding is that it is about a corporate image. So, as an example, we used to have our own logo, just as many other departments had their own logo, it was the little man, if you remember, in

E.S.C. (Education, Sport and Culture), but in Sport, Leisure and Recreation even we had one, but now clearly we all work under the same logo. So it is that corporate image and that corporate thing that is being brought together.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Are there any immediate practical steps, I mean, this is from a practical point of view and I like to think I am a pragmatist, maybe the Panel, if we could look into this and why, if there is some red tape which is obfuscating us in this instance, then ... because I think the problem with the States website in general is that things tend to get lost in it. I do not know if you have ever been on to it and tried to look for something specific, but I do not know how many people get to the Fort Regent part of that, let alone try and get specific information about stuff going on at the Fort.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I think the only thing I am mindful of and I am not saying that we are not giving you all the facts, but the facts might not be as correct as they should be, and it is only a suggestion but we can certainly direct you to the group who is responsible for developing this area, because we could be misleading you totally at the moment because we are not experts, we are not involved directly with the development. We know what we want and you have heard some of the views expressed, I think, by all of us about how we can promote it, the closer working relationship with the Tourism Department and Economic Development and that is something that we definitely want to be, and are, trying to drive forward.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay. Do you want to move ... thank you very much, Mr. Minister. We will now move to the next question from Montfort.

Deputy M. Tadier:

So what arrangement is there between the department and Tourism to ensure good advertising for the Fort?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Not as much as there should be is the short answer. Clearly we should be working far more closely with the Tourism Department and indeed I have already had discussions with the Minister of that department to look at how we can work together. There is some work being done and again perhaps our answers will explain some of the areas where we are working with the Tourism and people involved in tourism to promote use of the Fort.

Mr. D. de la Haye:

I think one of the things that I would say about that is we are not a major tourist destination. That is the first point. At the moment we operate as a sport and leisure centre, we welcome visitors; particularly we welcome visitors for events, whether they are sporting events whether they are dance events, whether they are concerts, whether they are conferences and so we work with Tourism particularly on those occasions to promote those activities and events. So if a tourist is interested in those events we hope that they are going to come for ... well, they might even come for that event, that might be the reason for them to come to Jersey in the first place and clearly we work with Tourism very closely there when we are developing events and promoting them outside of the Island. We do work with Tourism when there is a concert or a show that is going to be on most usually while that visitor is likely to be in the Island. We will do some promotions outside the Island so that they look at Jersey and say, yes, while I am there I could go to whatever concert it might be. But clearly there is little point in going to a hotel and advertising - in fact it is a really difficult advertising issue - a programme and say that there is a concert on in 3 weeks' time; the visitor says: "I would love ... no, I cannot." So you have almost raised their expectations and given them a blow, so it is about trying to time it so that the advertising is targeted and

focused so that they hopefully are attracted by that event and can indeed attend it, because they are still in the Island at that time. So I think it is a combination of things; yes, we play our part in attracting visitors to Jersey because that is the very reason for them coming, but also when they are here: "Please come and see Fort Regent or use Fort Regent if it is appropriate for you" but do not come and expect a fair or entertainment, you know, at 10.00 a.m. on a Friday morning or whatever."

Deputy M. Tadier:

I think Derek has hit the nail on the head, I think the problem is not so much with advertising because there is a sense in which the Fort advertises itself, it is set up on the hill and from my experience working at the Tourist Office people would come in and ask about Fort Regent, so you would not necessarily have to go and advertise it. But the point is you cannot advertise something if there is nothing there to advertise, if there is nothing there to entice them there. So I guess the next question is what could we be doing as an Island to entice people up to Fort Regent to get tourists up there so that once they get up there there is something to do?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Well, I think we missed the fact that there is a lot of public events, for want of a better description, that take place at the Fort. Whether it is concerts, whether it is circuses, whether it is for sports events ... and there are some major events, whether it is a music concert; we have got a dance world competition that is taking place in the not too distant future with over 600 dancers coming. I mean this is good news but do we advertise it enough, do we promote it enough? I am sorry but we do not. Those are the things, yes, in future if we can develop and improve and again we come back to access and so on and so forth; it is all about improving the facilities at the site, we can draw more people up there. Even if it is just to go and have a meal, go and have a cup of tea, see the views, visit the heritage, walk through to Havre des Pas and the beach. I mean all of these things are possible and do not necessarily mean huge sums of money, but clearly we need to harness a vision for the Fort and then move it forward.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay. Oddly enough, there is a little comment there which was ... I think, by one of the consulting candidates made that comment, why is there not ... I mean, going from the sort of major to minor, so to speak, why is there not a page in *What's On*, just by way of example, you know the thing we all get at the airport when we arrive?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I think it is as Derek has highlighted, *What's On* is a long-term ...

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

So not what is on in terms of, okay, we are not primarily a heritage site, but you might find it most interesting to sort of wander round and have cup of tea, you know what I mean?

Mr. D. de la Haye:

Yes, I think it is an issue that we need to revisit and look at and see, you know, where we are placed, but we have got to be clear about what we advertise when we are in *What's On*. But I think that there is some merit and I think it is something that we probably need to take up and I will ask somebody to look at that issue. I think it is a point well made.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay. We will come back to a well-known question, Graeme?

The Connétable of St. John:

What affect has the closure of the cable cars had on the footfall at the Fort?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I am going to pass this to one of my colleagues.

Mr. D. de la Haye:

The best information that we have is that when the cable car closed, in the year following that, there was about a 12 and a half per cent reduction in the number of visitors to Fort Regent. We are fairly certain they are accurate figures. One of the things that was focused around that time of course is soon after that the swimming pool was no longer there, so all of those things got intermingled. But we know it is 12 and a half per cent. Those were the figures that we had for the ...

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

That was from what year to what year?

Mr. D. de la Haye:

From one year to the year after.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Which were?

Mr. D. de la Haye:

1993 to ... Angie, can you help? Three?

Ms Angie Boucheré:

I am not sure when the cable cars closed, but if you said it is about 2 years before the pool, the pool closed in 2003.

Mr. D. de la Haye:

So, yes, it is before that.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

It was 1992, I think.

Mr. D. de la Haye:

Yes, I think it was 1992, 1993.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

The cable car ceased?

Mr. D. de la Haye:

That is right. I think it was that sort of ... yes, it was 1992, yes.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

So obviously the attendance then went to a lower level and stayed there or kept gradually declining?

Mr. D. de la Haye:

Well, it stayed there for a year or 2 but then it went down when the swimming pool went and that was another thing that made the numbers go down. Obviously there was a ...

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Do you have perchance that figure? I mean you have given the figures but just basically for the record.

Mr. D. de la Haye:
In terms of numbers?

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:
What the swimming pool closure did to the numbers.

Mr. D. de la Haye:
I would say about 200,000 people per annum.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:
So as a percentage?

Mr. D. Bisson:
Difficult. I can get the information because we recorded the numbers before the pool closed.

Mr. D. de la Haye:
About 25 per cent would be my guess, but we will clarify that.

The Connétable of St. John:
Just to butt in here, we spoke this morning with Property Services and obviously we have got the stimulus package out there. Has the department put any bids in for timely, temporary, targeted in terms of, you know, possibly getting some sort of temporary bus service running up to the Fort until something more permanent can be done?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:
The bus service, I am afraid - I mean, this is my personal view - is not the answer.

The Connétable of St. John:
No, it is not a permanent answer. I am working on the temporary side with that.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:
I think that we have got to encourage people that ... and I suppose due to the fact that we would like to promote healthier lifestyles, and ultimately that is what the Fort is all about, what is wrong with walking up a hill and some stairs? Because there is access, let us not forget.

Deputy M. Tadier:
When they get up there they might be too tired to get down again. **[Laughter]**

The Deputy of St. Ouen:
But, as I say, there is access and even if, you know, you get Pier Road car park, after that there are lifts and escalators to take you to the entrance to the Fort.

Deputy M. Tadier:
We had one comment, maybe it is a good time to interject, that going up to Fort Regent there is nothing on the lift to tell you which floor to get out at. Well, certainly I do not think on the lift itself, there may be on the outside and it is fairly badly indicated. So whether that could be improved, just make it slightly more enticing because that is effectively the entrance to Fort Regent for most people.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:
Good point.

Mr. D. de la Haye:

I think there is some signage which clearly needs to be looked at. Take that point.

Ms Angie Boucheré:

I think it says Fort Regent level 10.

The Connétable of St. John:

Right. Is that outside or in the lift?

Ms Angie Boucheré:

Yes.

Mr. I. Barclay:

Well, I messed up because was my comment. I found it very difficult to find my way, you know, up the lifts and then into whatever direction, I got lost completely - twice.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes, and it is good to have the outside perspective because we just go up there, we do not even think about whether they have signs or not.

Mr. D. de la Haye:

Clearly it is not the first time that we have heard that comment. It is an issue. We know that access to Fort Regent is an issue and the question was around have we put in an application; no, we have not for Fort Regent. You raise an interesting one. It is not something that we thought about, you know. I am not sure how far it would have got in terms of an application, but we have not done that. But access really is important. The Minister just said: "Well maybe people should walk there." We are now in a position where some of the users of Fort Regent ... I had a meeting this week ... some of the users of Fort Regent to get from the reception to the gym, believe it or not, which is what we are encouraging them to go and use, they are not able to do that because they are not in good enough condition to walk the distance. You may think that is bizarre but it is true, because we need them to get from there to that point and I think you visited on a day when there were a number of fairly senior citizens now and access for those people is really, really important, so they are not going to wander from different places. It is an important access for a lot of the people who work in this area in the offices and things, theirs is not so much a problem of being able to walk up the road, theirs is more an issue of time. I know it may sound bizarre because when you get there you have got to go and get some exercise mostly, not always, but that is what you need. We live in a convenience world and so access is really important and speed is really important, so you can get from wherever you are going. Now maybe we should encourage everybody to slow down, relax and take more time, but that is not the reality.

The Connétable of St. John:

I have to say I was a little confused with the Minister's answer there, because it totally contradicted the car park idea.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

The car park idea is a combination that will, in my view, provide access to the Fort as an indirect benefit to having a facility which is required for the Parish.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay. Thank you, Mr. Minister. We will now move on to another sort of historical heritage question from Tracey.

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

How has the department worked with Jersey Heritage to preserve the unique military structure and historical importance of Fort Regent?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I think again we have already touched on this. We do work with Jersey Heritage because they are responsible for all our heritage sites. A conservation statement was commissioned, I believe, in 2007 which details the historic aspects which need be preserved and promoted in the future. I think that is on our website. Some information is displayed on signage around the Fort and part of the redevelopment plans proposed - and I am talking about the EDAW Report, I believe - that some form of visitor centre that guided people and directed them to certain heritage aspects in and around the complex could be further developed. But in some respects, yes, we have worked, hopefully in the development, in the initial development of the Fort, to ensure that certain areas and aspects of the Fort were preserved. But currently it is limited.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

So, once that conservation statement was draw up, and given the interest that Jersey Heritage now have in it, although with their own pressures, it is back to the question we have been asking, and Graeme asked recently. I mean, is anyone driving the heritage side through and saying: "Look, we can do things that can co-exist with the existing activities. We do not have to strip the place out and go back to the original stonework." Is there anyone who is driving that at the moment?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Well, I think that this is where ... and probably part of the problem of the Fort. If you go back in time there is this tension between the heritage side and a communal facility. We have got to be clear what we want. You know, if you are going to say: "We want to promote it as a heritage site" well, there is going to be conflict. A lot of what, I believe, we are currently getting on the site, although there are synergies with it, yes, there are opportunities to identify it, but if the States take it to the ultimate, one could argue that as a heritage site certain developments are not acceptable. Now, if ... and there is a debate to be had. If that view was taken, what impact might that have on the ability to maximise and benefit from the area that exists for the community? Because, ultimately, it is a community facility owned by the public. We do have some very good and preserved and important heritage sites on this Island. Equally, there are others - and I would suggest Fort Regent may fall into this category - that provide the opportunity for a benefit over and above simply the one of heritage.

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

I think you have proven it though, as a department, that if you have a name you can achieve very good results with the sport side of things. I mean, you have got a very difficult building to work with and, personally, I think you have done it very, very well.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Thank you.

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

So it is just getting that aim. But, I mean, there must be something that you want to get on with and bring something to get Fort Regent going, whether it is heritage or sport or culture or whatever it is. Forget about the money. **[Laughter]** I know it is an important aspect, but you have to get that aim first before you know how much it is going to cost. So, it has got to start somewhere.

Mr. D. Bisson:

I do believe the aims are there. I think most people, you know, want to see ... and it has been reinforced that we need a public sports and leisure facility in that location; that is the first thing. But what we have to recognise as well is that we are operating within a heritage site and we have to respect that. There is also an opportunity there as well as the heritage site. So, how do we maximise the heritage value of the Fort, along with developing the sport and communal facilities within the Fort? That is the big challenge and that challenge has been there for a long time; it is not new. But I think it can be achieved, but it does ... I am sorry, but it does come back to the funding and access. Those are the 2 things really which will drive this whole thing forward and make the differences that we need to make. Without that we are going to be swimming around in a whirlpool like we have been for the last 10 or 15 years.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

All right. Montford?

Deputy M. Tadier:

Now, Mr. Minister, what I am quite interested in is this apparent conflict there between heritage and the leisure usage. I think you would probably agree that there can, certainly in an ideal world, be a kind of marriage between the 2; that it is possible to promote both the heritage aspect and the sports aspect of it. But if I take on board what you have said about the conflict, is that a perception maybe from the department, there is a conflict within the department as to what it can do itself to promote both the heritage side and the sport side?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Not at all. Not at all. I mean, I do not think I used the word conflict, I think I used the word tension.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I think you did but ...

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

But, I mean, if I did I apologise. I mean, there is a tension, which is bound to exist because even in my short time as Minister for Education, Sport and Culture, I am well aware of the need to maintain and preserve our heritage sites. Equally, as a Minister responsible for sport in Fort Regent, I am equally aware that there are many, many, many users and I am sure that you are now aware who use the facilities at the Fort on a regular basis, that if it had been preserved solely as a heritage site in the same way that, let us say Elizabeth Castle has been, Mont Orgueil, there would not have been the same benefit to those people. That is where, as I say, I would suggest the tensions come and the different views will be expressed, I am sure. Does that mean that we cannot do both and ensure that things happen? Absolutely not. I think a benefit of having a department that is responsible for sport and culture and the synergies that exist between them is brilliant and it does help us to marry the 2 areas together. In addition, do not forget, there is the educational one and the access for our young people in schools to visit the sites and not only learn about one of the heritage sites, and important heritage sites on our Island, but also to enjoy some of the facilities that are provided within it.

Deputy M. Tadier:

If I can rephrase it. I mean, that was not in any way a criticism; I think you are quite right in pointing out that there does exist a tension, but what I am trying to draw out is perhaps what the responsibility and the remit of your department is to look after heritage and to what extent should it be something that is left maybe to heritage, where you liaise where necessary. I mean, how do you see your role and heritage role in forging a way ...

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

We co-exist. It is a definite partnership arrangement. Clearly, we discuss many issues to do with our

heritage sites and the future. The Fort Regent would obviously play an important part in those discussions, as are our other sites. My only fear - and it is down to funding - that the ... I am sure Jersey Heritage will tell you that they would love to do more and they could do more if they were given £2 million more per annum to continue to promote and enhance our heritage sites and experiences across the Island. The reality is that I have had to inform them that currently £2 million additional funding is out of the question. Now, that does not mean to say that we ignore the needs and the requirements of our heritage and the requirement or need to maintain the facilities; it just means that there are increased challenges that I and the department face.

Mr. D. Bisson:

I think from a personal point, I would say that because the sport division is within the heritage site that maybe the heritage side of it is left, in the sense of the ... I have not explained myself very well, but because we are there, there may not be as much interest put into Fort Regent as maybe some of the other historical sites, like the castles and other things, because obviously they need that. But the fact that we are there as a resident in there, I think people think: "Oh, they are there, so maybe the building is ... you know, it is okay, it has not been ..." I think the time to really involve the heritage a lot more into the building will be the time when we can look at improved access and the redevelopment and where we are going. Because then we would ... I think we would need to go to them and say: "Well, from a heritage perspective we are not the experts, you are. What do you want done here to raise the heritage aspect of the Fort?" I think that would be a good time to bring them in, into the discussions.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Absolutely, and I am sure they would be keen.

Ms. A. Boucheré:

Can I just say that we do have some really good pictures around the Fort with the history of the Fort; they link the piazza through to Gloucester Hall. We have a lot more that we are getting out that were going to link other areas. We also have - I am not sure if they are called blue flag or whatever it is for tourism - they bring up regular walks and go through the history of the Fort, they go down the well, they go up the northern rigouts and that is really popular. They do that on a regular basis, so there is a link.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Well, that is good. Yes, that is good. Blue guides. Yes, blue badge guides.

Ms. A. Boucheré:

Blue guides, is it?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Blue badge guides.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay. In a way, the last 2 questions are what we discussed at the beginning, but for the record I will go through these. You might have reconsidered as the afternoon proceeded. So what mechanisms are in place in the department to undertake strategic planning of the Fort's future?

Ms. A. Boucheré:

Do not say sustainable.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Sorry?

Ms. A. Boucheré:

Do not say sustainable. [Laughter]

Deputy M. Tadier:

You can, but only if you use it in the right ... in the true sense of the word.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I mean, there are a number of mechanisms in place. Firstly, there is a genuine desire to continue to promote both culture, heritage and sport to the local community and the opportunities that Fort Regent provides for that is good and we need to move that on. The department has worked, and is working, I believe, with EDAW, and I am not sure if ... I use that and maybe someone could tell me what the letters mean?

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

It is the consultancy that produces the town ...

Mr. D. de la Haye:

It is a consultancy.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

... the master plan, or suggested master plan.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Thank you. With Property Holdings, because clearly there is a relationship with them to further the strategic plan and aims of the Fort. Equally, and it is not meant to be taken in the wrong way, I really do hope that the efforts that the Panel is making to look at the opportunity in the future for Fort Regent will bring some ideas and proposals to the Fort. Indeed, I thank you for considering the Fort as a good review project.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

The next question which Graeme is going to ask fits in with it, but as a ... I will just restate it; we said it a few times, but we may as well say it again. I suppose short of the political level, who are the champions for the Fort? Who are the people who are going to stop us going round and round in this whirlpool? Who do you think, from your 10 years' observation?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

It is us, I am afraid. [Laughter]

Mr. D. Bisson:

I think the only way we are going to bring a halt to this whirlpool is to recognise that we need to bring investment into the Fort and I believe there are ways of bringing investment into the Fort without having to go cap in hand to the States, because the States are not going to give us the money in the current climate and they will not give us the money for the next 10 years. They have not done so in the past 10 years. So we really have to look at the commercial aspects, or opportunities, sorry, rather ... the commercial opportunities that are available within the Fort and around the Fort and have some partnership arrangements with some commercial developers. I know you have discussed the various types of commercial opportunities there are, but that is the one way I believe we will bring some investment, some real investment, to the Fort to undertake the changes we need to do there. When I talk about changes, we are talking about the infrastructure of the Fort, the environmental issues in the Fort, which are ongoing problems; all those sort of issues can only be dealt with with some investment. That has to be done, I believe, through a shared partnership with commercial developments in the areas which

are no longer used. I mean, they are derelict now. The pool site is derelict. It is an eyesore, it is a pain, it is a security issue to us. The cable car site, it is derelict. I mean, there are opportunities there and I am sure that that is the way we must move forward.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

We have had one ... it came in very late and we have not been able to show it to you, but there ... it came up in Waterfront discussion earlier on. There is this notion that if you can get an almost turnkey operation to move into the Fort and you give it all to them - and names like Center Parcs are spoken of, for example, big leisure operators - and somehow they would negotiate with you to retain the essence of your sports and leisure activities, but they would essentially be given the workable parts of the Fort at some kind of rate, I do not know, and told: "Develop it", do you think that is a way forward?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Can I just pitch in there? I think that I have a number of concerns and I will be interested to see what conclusions the Panel draws with regards that idea. But in the case of Fort Regent, and indeed other facilities, I think that my department has shown itself to be good administrators with good management that provides facilities that private sector might be unable to provide, or at least could be more expensive. There are ... we are all aware of the Aqua Splash facility.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

It is the St. Ouen influence.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I dream. [Laughter]

Deputy M. Tadier:

Sorry, you will be back there soon.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Indeed, the ongoing cost that the States have to face to subsidise the provider in offering a facility to the public.

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

It was mentioned, the public/private partnership, that at the moment, according to Property Holdings, there is absolutely no appetite for that, at the moment.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Presumably - sorry to interrupt - it could be done on a ... it does not have to be a large scale, but there could be sections which could be handed over, concessions, private development.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Absolutely. I think that that is definitely the way forward. I think that we need to maintain a responsibility for the Fort Regent complex because it certainly fits with the various elements of my department. But equally, private/public partnerships can work and deliver and enhance the provisions that we already have at the complex. So, absolutely. Absolutely. It is just to identify, I suppose, those partners and then also find out what they can bring to the table.

Mr. D. de la Haye:

Can I just add to that? David has been there 10 years, I think I have just counted up I am about 14 years into my time there. I think Angie ... David and my time combined does not meet how many years Angie has been there, but anyway. I think I have seen quite a few proposals in those 14 years. It still

remains the most unanswered question that I have: what is going to happen to Fort Regent? I think my view is very firmly that we have a sport and leisure facility at the moment which is extremely well used, well loved, by a large number of the community. I think we need to retain that, but look at the opportunities around that to complement the activities that are going on there and to try and get some investment into the facility to continue that. It is interesting because I have heard people come in and say: "The Center Parcs kind of model; let us put it in there, let us do that." I have heard the private/partnership: "Let us get an operator in", all those kind of things. I hear those things, but nobody has come running to do that yet, not unless they get a whopping great subsidy, management fee, in order to do it. I think the danger of doing that kind of thing is that it could be quite short term. You have seen the figures; we run the facility at something like £560,000 a year and hidden within that there is an enormous amount of social support. I think you saw that when you came up to Fort Regent; not only a lot of senior citizens, but hard to reach groups, special needs groups - a whole range of people that were there. If you had a person running on a management fee, while it is possible to have that kind of thing they would not be quite so social minded in the way that they do it; the fee would be much greater. So, at the end of the day, the cost to the public would be greater. I think we would lose something because while there are a number of people in the Island who think that it is something that is not very effective and not very good, those usually are the people that have not been there. I think we have got a real responsibility to continue to get more people to come and visit Fort Regent and then show them what does happen. I dare risk saying that some of you people when you came around probably learnt more than you knew before and certainly, I hope, were reasonably well impressed with what is going on there. I think we have got the responsibility to get more people to come up and see what goes on and hopefully to get them to come and participate in some of the activities, whether they are around sport, whether they are around culture, or whether they are around heritage, which you have talked a little bit around today. So, I think it needs to remain in the ... very firmly in the public ownership, the community needs to use it, and we need to look to see how we can enhance those and ensure that there is a long-term future for it.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay, thank you, Derek. Which leads us very neatly into the last question.

The Connétable of St. John:

Last, but not least. What is the department's vision for the future of Fort Regent, and what does it entail, and how can it be realised?

Mr. D. de la Haye:

I will start, because I have just finished. I will start, because I have just finished, because that is my vision and I ... perhaps I pre-empted that. How do we get there? I think it has got to be about trying to find secure ways of getting some investment into it. Five years ... how many years? Nine years ago, whatever year it was, we went to the States and I naively, as an officer, thought: "Great, we have done our piece of work, the States have committed to it, they have said it is a really good idea. Oops, where is the money?" Because it is about money and priorities and you have got to look at priorities and we all know that those priorities are going to get even more and more difficult. So that is not a realistic route. The States, when you sit in that ... in the Chamber, not so far away from here, I do not believe they are going to be voting large amounts of money to put in investment for Fort Regent; I just do not believe it is possible in the current climate, so we have got to find alternatives. That has got to be about partnerships and look at the development opportunities so that we can secure some funding so that those activities there complement what is going on, support what is going on, and we can continue to develop the activities inside.

The Connétable of St. John:

I mean, certainly this morning there was a quite a strong emphasis on hotel, on the pool site. Most

hotels, whether it is 3, 4, or 5-star, are going to want a swimming pool. Do you think there is any mileage in a swimming pool underneath a hotel for public use, or even a split? You know, the hotel having its own pool - you have only got to put in one lot of machinery to operate these things - and having a public pool there as well? Perhaps not Olympic size ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

You are not allowed.

Mr. D. de la Haye:

I think we would have to look at that carefully. Under the current arrangements it is not possible to develop a public swimming pool within a radius, I think, of 2 and a half miles of the Aqua Splash.

The Connétable of St. John:

It could be a private swimming pool for public use.

Mr. D. de la Haye:

However, how you define a public pool would be an interesting concept. So if there was a hotel developed and it had a swimming pool for the use of its residents, I really could not answer whether that would fit into the agreement.

The Connétable of St. John:

Or the hotel was open to the public. There is ...

Mr. D. Bisson:

The one issue, of course, is that the States have a degree of responsibility towards the Aqua Splash under the current agreement, which means we have to cover the additional subsidy. If you suddenly developed a pool on the Fort Regent site under a hotel, what you are going to find is that subsidy will increase because people might move from the Aqua Splash to the pool up at Fort Regent and then there would be a States-increased subsidy as a result of that because the current agreement is going to run for another 15 years.

Deputy M. Tadier:

What if you have a private pool? Just a swimming pool?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Well, these details will all need to be considered.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

That is what Derek is saying.

Deputy M. Tadier:

That is what he is saying; it is a private pool?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

You ascribe to that idea; it does not necessarily have to be a pool. But I think all of these issues could be determined as and when and if we can find certain people from within the private sector that are interested in entering into a partnership to further develop the Fort. I think the point that I would like to make, I suppose, and maybe finish on, is the fact that we forget sometimes, or we do not recognise, that we have an absolute unique facility at the Fort that nowhere else, I doubt in the world even, would have a similar facility. I know many people, and I think Derek has confirmed this to me in recent times, have commented on the fact: "What a wonderful place, that it can accommodate all these different elements",

whether it is for sports, whether it is for concerts, whether it is for conferences, and so on and so forth. We need to ask ourselves: “Well, how would we provide such a facility [this is a new facility] elsewhere?” You just would not. I think that that is the thing that we need to keep focus on and recognise, as I say, that it is unique and that it needs being taken to the next step. We need to have that vision. We need to have that commitment to this facility that ensures that future generations will be able to enjoy it.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay, thank you. I will ask the members of the Panel, have they got any final points? Ian, do you want to ask anything?

Mr. I. Barclay:

I do have a ... I have been listening, obviously, with great interest. I mean, I do have just a question, I suppose. You have made it quite clear that partnerships ... that investment from external partners is the only realistic option, particularly those who have been involved with the Fort for a long period of time, have you got any very specific views, presumably by now, of what partnerships those should be and for which facilities?

Mr. D. Bisson:

I mean, when I spoke about partnerships it is trying to bring some commercial money and reinvest that in a public facility; that was really what I was trying to say. The pool site is a unique site, it is a fantastic site, and it must be open to fantastic development opportunities with a commercial developer there. The money that can be brought in through there should be used to invest in the Fort. I mean, the Fort is a fantastic building, it has got a unique atmosphere, but you come in the winter it is cold, the glazing is out of date, all the environmental areas are ... so, we are bringing our customers in and we are not making them that comfortable, so we can improve the comfort levels by bringing that investment in the Fort. There are all sorts of things we can do just to raise the level of expectations of our customers, which we need to do. We have a lot of very loyal customers; they keep coming back. Memberships are growing every year, income is increasing every year, so we are doing something right, but if we can just do something more to just give it that little bit more.

Mr. I. Barclay:

So, it is a commercial investment; it does not matter what it ... just as long as it is acceptable from a planning point of view, it is a commercial investment that will bring money into improve existing facilities?

Mr. D. Bisson:

Absolutely. That is the way I see it.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I would say ... I have one proviso to that, that I believe that any development needs to enhance the provision that is currently assigned to this site. I am not suggesting it would not, but I think that the plan ... and I would hope that the planners would be mindful of that if they were to enter into some form of development agreement or ... with the pool site, or other areas, because there are others.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Anything more, Ian?

Mr. I. Barclay:

No, that is it.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Any final comments? I mean, there is an obvious chance that we may have to meet again, or as has already become clear, we may have to send a little letter asking for a few more facts, for example, because the more witnesses we hear, obviously, the more it broadens our understanding and the more we might have to come back to you. But, at the moment, any comments?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Just one final add on, and it is not to sum up the meeting at all, it is just that we are aware that the sea cadets have a premises on site and it has always been accepted that it seems rather odd that the sea cadets are based 300 foot above the sea in a Fort when clearly they would be better provided with a facility adjacent or close to the sea. Certainly, it is something that has been discussed in the past and I think that we would like to pursue their relocation, if possible. So that is just another element, if you like, in the future redevelopment of the Fort that needs to be considered.

Mr. D. de la Haye:

I think they would as well, Minister. It is not just us; I think the sea cadets would, just to add to the ...

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay. You want to say something?

Mr. D. Bisson:

Just a final ... obviously, the staff working within the Fort have been working under all sorts of indecision for a number of years. This process we are going through now has again raised their expectations. It is inevitable it does, but I mean, they know what is going on, this will raise their expectations. Really, I know a lot of this is not within your own control or within your own power to do, but it would be really good to see something come out of this of a positive nature so we can go back to the staff and say: "This time something is going to happen."

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

Okay, we put it to the Minister then; if the Chief Minister really believes that culture comes under the remit of the whole of the Council of Ministers, you are going to have to do some pushing.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Are you suggesting I have not already?

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

Sorry?

Deputy M. Tadier:

I think she is referring to the strategic plan.

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

I presume the Minister believes that it goes under the whole culture area then ...

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Absolutely, but I also think that ... I am not trying to absolve myself from responsibility, because equally it is clear I am. However, there are some big issues that we, as States Members, need to consider.

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

There are going to be big issues.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

This is one of them.

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

Yes, it is.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

There is no doubt, as Tracey has indicated, it has to come back on the States radar. It was sad, in a way, that there was not a fiscal stimulus proposal; it was quite sad.

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

I am quite surprised ...

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

It is not for me to interfere with that; I think just as a comment ...

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

I am quite surprised there was nothing put forward for demolition of the swimming pool area.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

It is Property Holdings who handle that as your landlord, as was made clear to us this morning.

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

Because it is ...

Mr. D. de la Haye:

What would have happened if it had been demolished?

Deputy M. Tadier:

Well, it might sound academic ...

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

Saved you money?

Deputy M. Tadier:

... presuming it does need to be demolished at some point, and that is not a given either ...

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

We hear what you are saying. I mean, it is an eyesore.

Deputy M. Tadier:

... it is just the money is not available at the moment.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I prefer to see demolition linked to redevelopment.

The Connétable of St. John:

One quick question ...

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

One final one.

The Connétable of St. John:

Obviously you have got quite vast areas up there that are underutilised at the moment in terms of open-air space. We have got quite a lot of different areas where you could expand your operations up there, given the longer term, but things that are going to be ... well, not quite self-funding, but ...

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Yes, there are areas we could cover in and there are areas that could be further developed. There are opportunities, clearly. I think it is ... and perhaps there is a need for the department, depending on the outcome of this review, to engage with a commercial adviser or ... that clearly would be able to help us to review the opportunities that exist, that has that entrepreneurial type of outlook that comes up with some practical, commercial solutions. Clearly, as a department, we do not bring those sort of skills, naturally, to the table.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay, thank you. Yes, thank you. Thank you very much for attending. You can certainly ... as I think it was Montford said, and other people have said, people are certainly impressed by the passion and commitment that we find from the staff at the Fort, irrespective of the kind of constraints under which you work, so you can certainly take that message back - it is very, very evident - and of course, the passion and the commitment of the local population, which we experienced at the meeting. So, I would like to thank you very much indeed and we will now finish the meeting. Thank you.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Thank you.

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

Thank you.