

19th November 2013

3.2 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding the reinstatement of the Les Quennevais Playing Fields playground:

Further to the Minister's response on 15th July 2013, will he advise what progress, if any, has been made towards the reinstatement of the playground on Les Quennevais Playing Fields which was removed earlier in the year?

Deputy P.J.D. Ryan of St. John (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

Yes, I am delighted to say that the play equipment has been ordered now and is due in the Island this week. Installation, which is being carried out by a local contractor, will take approximately a week once the equipment arrives. A new safety surface will then be laid after that, which will take a further week. The new park should be open in time for the school holidays this Christmas.

3.2.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

Will the Minister comment on the words of his Assistant Minister in August when he told the media that the proposed work to replace the play area was currently out to tender and the park would be set to reopen in October. Clearly this is not the case. Given, the delay, would he advise why no signs were put up on the area and why no signs are still there.

The Deputy of St. John:

I do not really want to make too much of a comment on that. Clearly my Assistant Minister was speaking from the information he had at the time. These things do sometimes take a little time. They have to go out to tender properly. Also, the necessary equipment has to be manufactured in many cases. People do not necessarily hold these things in stock. There have been a few delays and I am sorry for that, but we are doing our best to reinstate this park as quickly as we can. I would like to thank the Deputy for helping us to understand how important this play area is to the local residents in that area. Thank you.

3.2.2 Deputy J.H. Young of St. Brelade:

I am pleased to hear the Minister recognise how important it is, given how busy that area is and there is no facility for young children. Could he clarify, in view of the fact that it is a very small project and the decision was taken ahead of planning for its replacement to remove it, is it always going to be the case that we take nearly 9 months with such important projects? Is that the norm in minor project procurement?

The Deputy of St. John:

I would say that is not normally the practice. But I think the Deputy, and I am sure the residents, understand that when something happens relatively quickly there are not always the budgets available instantly to deal with them. In this particular case it is a total cost of something approaching £40,000. Although we do have minor capital budgets and we have repairs and renewals budgets, we also have a contingency within the department. It is not always clear early on, particularly early on in a financial year, whether those budgets are going to be available. In fact we have made the budgets available. That is because we are close to the end so we can use monies from things like contingencies, which would not have been clear that we could use early on in the year. I apologise. It is one of those things. We have done it as quickly as we can. As I say, it is good news, it should be open in time for Christmas.

3.2.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

First of all, if I can thank the Minister and his department for the work; it is reassuring that at least it will be done before Christmas and we will keep on monitoring that. We have had a long lead-in period. The decision to remove the area was taken in January. It is only through political pressure it seems that we have reached the point where this is being reinstated within the same 12 months. Will

the Minister make sure that in future when any amenities are removed that there is proper consultation, proper signage that goes up - it is not simply the residents, but it is people from all over the Island who use that area - so that they can be fully informed and ultimately get their value as taxpayers?

The Deputy of St. John:

I think the question of the signage is a valid one. I will look into why the signage wasn't there. My understanding was that there was signage. Maybe it was removed prematurely. I do not know. I will undertake to look into that. With regard to removal in January, it was removed for reasons of health and safety, looking after the children and not allowing dangerous equipment to be used. That can happen at pretty short-notice over all of the facilities that the Education, Sport and Culture Department runs throughout the Island. When that happens we have to remove it fairly quickly, for those reasons. We were always going to replace this equipment. Once we knew that it was damaged and unusable, we were always going to replace this equipment in 2014. We have managed to bring it forward. We had not budgeted for this replacement in 2013. It was going to be replaced in 2014 in any case. But, as I say, it is good news we have managed to do it early.

3.2.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

May I seek clarification? It is an important point. The Assistant Minister in a previous answer said that the decision was taken in January, but the equipment was not removed until April. Is he saying that given that it was in such a dangerous and bad state of repair the department had to wait 3 and a half months to remove this?

The Deputy of St. John:

I am not sure, looking back over time, what the exact situation was with its removal. I know that it was closed in January and maybe the equipment was removed a little bit later on. I am not sure of the exact details. I can certainly find out and tell the Deputy later.