

4. Questions to Ministers without notice - The Minister for Economic Development

4.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Would the Minister, given his propensity for bollards and expanding management structures, outline why the airport requires both a strategic planning manager and a strategic change manager?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean (The Minister for Economic Development):

I thank the Deputy for his question and his comments yet again about his interest in bollards. A great deal of work has been undertaken in recent times at Jersey Airport and Members will note there is a short-term increase in staff in areas such as compliance. It is important that the airport operates in a proper and safe environment and as such these new posts to which the Deputy refers fall into those particular categories. We have put in place a great deal of change and that will drive greater efficiencies in the future, which is essential for sustainability of the airport.

4.1.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I will at the invitation of the Assistant Minister be going, as he knows, to look at this in more detail, but I wonder could he distinguish between strategic planning and strategic change and tell us (a) why it is not an integral part of every manager's job, and (b) if they have to be separated why these 2 posts cannot be one post?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I do appreciate that the Deputy will be looking in more detail at the airport and I think these matters and many more will become apparent. Clearly, these 2 posts are separate posts because it is important that the right expertise is in place for planning and the right expertise is in place for change. They are 2 separate disciplines.

4.2 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

Recently a boat came into Jersey called "Tickled Pink". It was a big boat. It was in the marina and great play was made about the fact that big boats coming to Jersey was good news. Is this boat currently residing in a French port subsidised by the harbour authorities? Where has it gone and where are the other ones coming from?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I can tell the Deputy that the boat in question has been sold. The owners of the boat, I understand, are in the process of acquiring a new vessel and I am sure there will be further large vessels that will benefit the local harbour and economy.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Let us hope the owners are tickled pink as well, Minister. **[Laughter]** Deputy of St. John.

4.3 The Deputy of St. John:

As half my thunder has been stolen, I will use the other half. Given the marina at St. Helier was due to be totally revamped over this winter, is it still to go ahead and, if not, will he let the marina users know? Also, given that a year ago I raised to his notice certain works to be carried out within the marina - defects which have still not been completed a year later - when will these repairs be undertaken?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I can tell the Deputy that the work in question that he is referring to in the first part of his question, which formed part of the overall plans for reinvestment in the harbours, has been put on hold. That has been announced publicly both through the media and also directly to the various yacht clubs and associations. That was done specifically due to some misinterpretation of some plans that Jersey Harbours had for redevelopment in other areas of the harbour. As far

as the second part of the question, the Deputy asked about works that he had identified. Some of those works I understand have been undertaken and are moving towards completion. I am happy to get an update on the timeline for the other areas that he is concerned about.

4.3.1 The Deputy of St. John:

Given that things have been put on hold yet again, all those people with winter contracts that could not partake in the use of the marina over the winter, how much has the department lost through not being able to sell all its berths for the entire 6-month period?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

As the Deputy will know, the Harbours Department has managed to create more berths in total around the harbour, therefore generating more revenue. If you look at the revenues of the Harbours Department and particularly Jersey marinas the Deputy will see positive responses.

The Deputy of St. John:

Can the Minister answer the question, Sir? Please answer the question: how much revenue was lost by not selling the winter contracts for the 6-month period which is the usual procedure?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I think the Deputy needs to look at the revenue effect on an annualised basis, not just the winter contracts to which he is referring. There have, indeed, been additional berths created and, indeed, that increases revenue in a more positive way. If he would like further information, I am more than happy to meet with him to go through the details.

The Deputy of St. John:

Sir, can you instruct the Minister to answer the question and not to go around it?

The Deputy Bailiff:

It is a matter for the Minister as to how he answers the question. Deputy Vallois.

4.4 Deputy T.A. Vallois:

Could the Minister give an undertaking to provide a timescale in which the J.C.R.A. (Jersey Competition Regulatory Authority) will be able to implement the 57 recommendations identified in the Regulaid (Review of the Jersey Telecom Limited Separated Accounts and Wholesale Access Provisions) report which was published in 2009 on telecommunications?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Yes, I am more than happy to do that. In fact, I had a meeting only yesterday with the J.C.R.A. and we discussed that particular matter. A number of the recommendations have already been implemented or are being moved to be implemented and I am happy for the Deputy to have details on the full list. I will supply those to her.

[12:15]

4.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

In his response to my written question 10 earlier today the Minister gave the numbers of non-local jobs licences issued during the last 5 years. Would he undertake before the next meeting to put alongside that the number of (j) cats. and locals also issued in that time period, and will he state when he is likely to produce an answer on a sector basis as well as agreed in his question?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I think if the Deputy looks at the answer to the written question, there is detail in there about (j) categories. If he would like more information I am more than happy to include it as part of a further written question or, indeed, separately.

4.6 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

A nice easy question for the Minister: could he advise if the intended meeting between his Assistant Minister, the police and harbours has taken place to finally conclude the intended barrier solution to the anti-social behaviour problems at Albert Quay?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I understand the meeting has not yet taken place.

4.6.1 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Could the Minister say why not and when will it take place?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I will get back to the Deputy. I do not know the reason that the meeting has not taken place. We have recently had half term; it may well have been that people were away. I am happy to establish a likely date and inform him thereof.

4.7 Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

I will take this opportunity to get my question in that I did not earlier. What action, if any, has the Minister taken to combat gazumping within the property market? Will he be bringing proposals forward to the House to bring regulation to estate agents? **[Laughter]**

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Many Members will be aware that I am conflicted in this particular area. As such, the question was, in fact, going to be passed to my Assistant Minister if we had had an opportunity earlier to deal with it. I would be more than happy if the answer is circulated by email to the Deputy. My Assistant Minister will deal with matters in relation to this for the very reason that I am conflicted.

4.8 Deputy J.B. Fox:

The department at the present time is making progress on sea routes and, indeed, a Green Paper is shortly to be published which will involve Guernsey. Can the Minister give an update of where we are at the moment and when we are likely to see it being circulated?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Yes, indeed. I thank the Deputy for the question. There has been a delay in terms of collating the particular questions for the Green Paper. As the Deputy is aware, we decided to join with Guernsey to do a pan-Channel Islands consultation in this matter and agreement over the exact questions, therefore, took a little longer. However, I understand that the paper is now ready and will shortly go out and so the consultation process will commence and I hope to be able to report back to the House by the end of April or early May.

4.9 The Deputy of St. Martin:

Twelve months ago I asked the Minister about the provision for free parking at the airport and I was informed and Members were informed that the matter was in hand and arrangements would be in place very soon. Twelve months on, can the Minister tell the House where he is with the pickup area?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I am not sure that I said at the time - and I will check Hansard - that it would be available very shortly. I think what I did say was, in fact, that there would be changes with regard to the road system in due course as part of the capital programme at the airport and, indeed, that particular issue - which I understand, I have some sympathy; this point has been raised before not only by

the Deputy - would be looked at. I would repeat that. Yes, it will be looked at but at the present time there are no immediate plans for the reasons stated.

4.10 The Connétable of St. Mary:

Earlier today the Assistant Minister waxed lyrical about the possible future ability to trace cow genes back to the original cow. My concern in questioning was simply to see whether we had had the ability to trace back the 7 generations required by the herd book at the time when we adopted P.43. I would say that patently we did not. Will the Minister undertake to review the systems currently in place to safeguard the purity of the herd and, as a matter of reassurance to people who really feel that this is an important heritage issue, report back to the Assembly to confirm the validity of the systems in place?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Absolutely, I agree entirely with the Constable and I am more than happy to report back on that basis.

4.11 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

In his written answer to the States this morning, the Minister revealed that in 2009 passenger numbers fell by approximately 12.5 per cent or 20,000 while the airport directorate increased from 4 at the end of 2008 to 8 on 22nd February 2010, or 50 per cent. How does the Minister reconcile these 2 sets of figures and could he explain what these people are doing?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

In fact, at the end of December passenger numbers were down year on year by 8.5 per cent, not 12 per cent, so I am not quite sure where the Deputy's figures come from.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

It is an extrapolation of a very poor diagram that you have produced which disguises the true falls in the figures.

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

If the Deputy is referring to the graph, I do accept that in the written answer the writing on the graph is quite small. In fact, I do not wear glasses; I had to borrow my Assistant Minister's glasses to read it myself. I will give an undertaking to Members that documentation in written answers will be presented in a way which is slightly clearer because I do not think that is clear. So, in any event, 8.5 per cent was, in fact, the drop. If he is asking why we have had a drop in passenger numbers it is quite simple. Jersey, in fact, has fared relatively well compared to most airports.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

I did not ask why the numbers fell; I asked why, if the numbers have fallen by 8 per cent, the actual size of the directorate has gone up by 50 per cent.

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Well, quite simply, they are not directly related. As far as passenger numbers are concerned, that is an operational issue for the airport to ensure that we maintain, sustain and develop routes. We are operating in a very difficult global financial market at the moment. Most destinations have suffered. We have suffered less. As far as the directorate - an increase in numbers, which is what the Deputy was asking about - there has been a requirement to increase numbers for safety and compliance. That is an area that I think he is referring to, and the safety of passengers is absolutely paramount and will remain so.

4.12 Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

In respect of the work that the Minister and his department are undertaking to diversify the economy to lessen the over-reliance that this Island has on the financial sector, would the Minister outline to the House the current top 3 high-flying ideas for diversification?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Well, we continue to work closely with our key market, the financial services sector. As Members would imagine, that particular sector, although mature, is developing in many other regions and many other areas, both product development and towards the East Asia/Pacific ...

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Sir, the question was something different.

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I have been asked how we are dealing with developing the economy and that is a key part. It contributes a significant amount to the revenue for the Island. It is important that we look at new areas and new products. Outside of that, we will shortly be bringing forward the Intellectual Property Law to the House for their consideration. That is a major piece of work, more than 400 Articles, which we believe opens up opportunities for the Island. That is certainly a priority as far as the department is concerned.

4.12.1 Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

Would the Minister, therefore, then agree from his answer that there is no intention to diversify the economy into any areas outside of finance at this point in time?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

No, I would thoroughly disagree with that. There are many areas in which we work continuously through Jersey Enterprise to create new businesses. There were over 600 new businesses established in 2009 through Jersey Enterprise in all sectors of the economy. We continue to invest and work hard to develop new businesses and new ideas and that will always remain a key priority.

The Deputy Bailiff:

That brings an end to the second question period.