

STATES OF JERSEY



EXPENDITURE PROPOSALS FOR 2012 AND 2013 AND DRAFT BUDGET STATEMENT 2011 (P.157/2010): FOURTH AMENDMENT

Lodged au Greffe on 22nd November 2010
by Senator F. du H. Le Gresley

STATES GREFFE

EXPENDITURE PROPOSALS FOR 2012 AND 2013 AND DRAFT BUDGET
STATEMENT 2011 (P.157/2010): FOURTH AMENDMENT

PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (a) –

In paragraph (a), in order to bring forward the St. Martin's School Replacement capital project from 2013 to 2012, for the figure "£694,200,000" substitute the figure "£701,932,000", and for the figure "£688,300,000" substitute the figure "£680,568,000".

SENATOR F. du H. LE GRESLEY

REPORT

St. Martin's primary school is the Cinderella of the States primary schools. It is one of the few remaining primary schools in Jersey which does not meet Department for Education and Employment [DfEE] recommended guidelines for classroom size as the majority of the classrooms do not meet a minimum area of 65 square metres. The net usable area should be 1600 square metres but the shortfall is currently 470 square metres. As a short-term solution to the increasing pupil numbers, two temporary classrooms and a toilet block were erected **over 15 years ago**. These "port-a cabin" type buildings are now in a very poor state of repair and are considered no longer fit for purpose.

The need to improve the facilities at this school and replace the temporary classrooms and toilets with permanent buildings was identified as long ago as October 2006. A Feasibility Study was prepared by Property Holdings Architectural Services in March 2007 which proposed conversion of the hall, which was constructed in about 1980, into two or three classrooms and construction of a new hall on the site of the temporary classrooms. Improvements to the toilets, storage, circulation and mechanical and electrical services were also considered.

A subsequent revision of the feasibility study took place and it was proposed that existing roof space to the east of the first floor staff room could be used to provide additional accommodation in order to provide a parent/meeting room and medical room. In December 2008 the option to construct a new, single storey, single form entry school and 30 place nursery with associated hard and soft play areas, on the adjacent Field 327A was proposed. This school would comply with DfEE guidelines for a primary school of approximately 180 pupils.

The estimated cost of construction in February 2009, based on ground floor area of 2000m², including nursery, was £4.1 million. External works and contingency of 5% took this figure up to £5 million. Additional costs, which take the capital expenditure up to £7.7 million, include fittings, furniture, equipment and professional fees. One of the advantages of building a new school on the adjoining field is that it does not require any temporary accommodation and the pupils and staff can simply move in when it is ready.

The original school building was built in the early 1900s. Education, Sport and Culture enjoy the rights to the building and the site but the land belongs to the Parish of St. Martin. Field 327A, the proposed site for the new school, was purchased by the Public of the Island in March 1969. Once the new school is ready for occupation the original school and additions would be returned to the Parish of St. Martin, at no cost to the States of Jersey.

I became interested in St. Martin's School when I noticed a budget figure of £7.732 million for redevelopment in 2012 in the Annual Business Plan 2011. I was initially concerned that a complete rebuild was being proposed as I would have expected a refurbishment and extension of the existing buildings to have been the cheaper option. I am grateful to Deputy Andrew Green, Assistant Minister for Education, Sport and Culture, who invited me up to Highlands to view the Feasibility Study and I subsequently walked around the outside of the school during the summer holidays to view for myself the dilapidation of the buildings.

I was satisfied from my enquiries that building a new school, rather than refurbishment and extension of the existing school, was the right option as the cost difference between the two options is relatively minor at approximately £107,000. I thought no more about it until I noticed that P.157/2010 proposed that “**replacement of St. Martin’s school is retained within the Capital Programme but has been deferred from 2012 to 2013**”. I was unhappy with this decision and asked a question of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture at the States sitting on the 2nd November –

Senator F. du H. Le Gresley:

In the budget which we will be debating later this year, the capital of expenditure programme shows that the rebuild of St. Martin’s primary school is being deferred to 2013. Could I ask the Minister if he supports this decision and whether any attempts will be made to deal with the deteriorating condition of the temporary classrooms which are attached to the main building?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Do I support the decision to defer it? No. I would have loved it to have been built probably a year or 2 ago. The issue is that there are only sufficient funds for particular capital projects. It went through a prioritisation process and it has now been accepted that it should be built in, I think, it is 2013, as the Senator suggests. I would hope that that is a commitment that both the States and, indeed, the Council of Ministers at the time will meet.

On the 11th November I visited the school and spent time with the Head Teacher and Deputy Head. I must say that the warm welcome that I received was in stark contrast to the damp and cold environment that I found in many parts of the school. There is no doubt that staff morale is high and that the children are receiving an excellent education despite the cramped and inadequate conditions.

I was told that heating and plumbing are the biggest challenges. The boiler is around 18 years old and replacement parts are difficult to source. The lights throughout the school need to be on all year round due to the lack of natural light in many areas. The Feasibility Study states that “Although the buildings appear in reasonable condition for their age they have been altered and extended so many times that there is an air of dilapidation throughout particularly with mechanical and electrical services which are in need of a total upgrade”. Throughout the school there is a lack of storage. Sanitary ware in almost all cases is original. There are only two adult female toilets to serve a female establishment of 20. There is no disabled toilet or medical room.

I was shown an IT room which had inadequate work spaces for the number of users and a classroom which could barely accommodate 26 tables and chairs for the existing pupils. I was told that the reception class size will increase to 29 from September 2011. There are currently 58 children on the waiting list for entry at reception and 77 on the waiting list for the nursery. What was most noticeable was the very limited space in terms of circulation and the absence of smaller rooms for small group and one-to-one lessons.

The port-a-cabin buildings are cold in winter and too hot in summer. The plaster on the external walls of the “temporary classrooms” is deteriorating and the woodwork is

rotten in many places. There is no soak-away for rain water which adds to the problem of dampness and rotting of the boards at the base of these buildings. I was shown stains on ceilings in a number of areas throughout the school where rainwater has penetrated due to the condition of the roofs. The original school building is not double glazed and there is a lot of heat loss and draughts. Two storage rooms at the front of the building are particularly damp and have cracked internal plasterwork.

I believe that this primary school is no longer fit for 21st century education and that there should be no further delay in getting this project moving. I urge Members to support this Amendment.

Financial and manpower implications

The budget figure of £7.732 million will be brought forward to 2012 Capital Expenditure. Due to the recession there should be competitive tendering from local building contractors for the work.

Education, Sport and Culture and Jersey Property Holdings should be able to deal with this project from existing resources.