

3.3 Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier of the Minister for Economic Development regarding the promotion and development of Jersey's links with France:

What steps, if any, has the Minister taken to promote and develop Jersey's links with France? What resources are allocated to the promotion of economic links and, in particular, would he state what steps he is taking to promote locally the ferry service between Granville and Jersey which is partly funded by the French authorities in Normandy?

Deputy A.J.H. Maclean of St. Helier (Assistant Minister for Economic Development):

I would like to confirm that my department is taking the following steps to promote economic links with France. OXERA (Oxford Economic Research Associates) has been commissioned at our request to examine the economics of increasing trade links with France. The report is expected by the end of April. The Department is fully involved in the initiative led by the Chief Minister to develop trade, education and cultural links with France. This includes participation in the French Officer Working Group which was established by the previous Policy and Resources Committee as part of its French link strategy, and involvement in the recently established Brittany and Jersey working groups which are in contact with the Conseil General Ille et Vilaine, the development agency of Ille et Vilaine, the St. Malo Chamber of Commerce and the Jersey Chamber of Commerce. France is a vitally important market for Jersey tourism, and the Island of course, and a considerable effort is made to attract French visitors to the Island. Marketing and PR is carried out by French-based professionals working closely with tourism officers. The Department also works closely with transport carriers and funds joint advertising activities. In April, Jersey Tourism will participate in a joint activity with St. Malo and Ille et Vilaine in Paris to promote the extension of the TGV network to St. Malo. The Department also enjoys excellent relations with the Maison de Normandy and often works with it on projects of mutual interest. Trade development activity has taken place with Normandy related to the OXERA study on economic links involving the Chambers of Commerce in Caen and Cherbourg and assisted by the Maison de Jersey. It should be borne in mind that the Constable's question is very focussed; however economic links with France can be expected to benefit from economic development activity in general which is aimed at improving the commercial environment. In relation to the promotion of the ferry service...

The Deputy Bailiff:

How much longer are you going on for?

Deputy A.J.H. Maclean:

Not terribly much longer, Sir. I am getting to the more interesting parts. [Laughter]

The Deputy Bailiff:

Can I remind Ministers and Assistant Ministers that Standing Orders do talk of responses being concise?

Deputy A.J.H. Maclean:

I will try and be as brief as I can, Sir, in the remaining part. In relation to the promotion of the ferry service between Granville and Jersey the Department does not

promote the Normandy link locally but does work with all transport providers to attract visitors from France to Jersey for the considerable benefit of our Island economy. It should be noted the passenger numbers between Granville and Jersey have increased by more than 40 per cent comparing January and February 2004 with January and February 2005. In addition, Jersey Harbours supports new routes by offering incentives, such as reduced harbour dues. The Manche Iles express service has benefited from this incentive when it started operating from Granville to Jersey. I can also say that further incentives are currently being worked on to encourage additional traffic between Jersey and France. Finally, to summarise the resources that are specifically allocated to the promotion of economic links with France, Jersey Tourism's budget allocated to activities in the French and Jersey markets to attract inbound tourism amounts to £363,000. Of this, £50,000 is allocated to public relations, £198,000 is allocated to trade relations, and includes the use of staff in France, and £115,000 is allocated to consumer marketing. In addition, Jersey Tourism provides professional support in relation to its activities in France as part of its normal activity.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Deputy, I exercised tolerance there because you are new to the Assembly but that answer was far too long for this sort of question time. It went way beyond the matter asked and your department must do better in future.

3.3.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Could the Assistant Minister tell us, Sir, how he will measure the success or otherwise of this vast promotion?

Deputy A.J.H. Maclean:

I trust that the success will be evident by increased numbers of passengers arriving on our shores and increased level of activity within the trade sector which is resultant from the money that hopefully will be spent by the tourists we expect to attract.

3.3.2 The Connétable of St. Helier:

When the Assistant Minister eventually got to it he said that the passenger numbers have increased by 40 per cent for the Manche Iles express: could he tell us in which direction that has happened? And would he confirm that, when he says that no resources are being spent by his department to promote locally the ferry service, we are looking at an unsustainable ferry service if we are relying on the French to come here, doing nothing about sending Jersey people there?

Deputy A.J.H. Maclean:

We are obviously very concerned about tourists coming into the Island to improve the local economy and that was a point that I was making about the increased level of traffic, which is very encouraging to see. Although we are not having any direct involvement it would be unsustainable to have government intervention in individual businesses, but on a general economic basis there is a considerable amount of activity to help promote outward movement.

3.3.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Could the Assistant Minister tell us, in relation to the proposals for improved freight services in respect of Cherbourg and in respect of increasing frequency on the St. Malo route, where these are at, at the moment?

Deputy A.J.H. Maclean:

We are currently working closely with the existing operators to improve the freight capacity and the ability, in particular, of the operators to be able to carry and deal. It has been well publicised the situation with Jersey Oysters and the pod system that is currently used which is not effective for them. We are working with that company and others to try and overcome these problems and increase freight links. It should be noted in recent statistics released by Jersey Harbours that the level of freight activity between the Island and France has increased over the past 12 months, which is encouraging.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

And the Cherbourg route, Sir.

Deputy A.J.H. Maclean:

Yes, we are looking at that and that forms part of OXERA's study which is under way at the present time, so when that comes back at the end of April we will be able to give a more detailed answer.

3.3.4 Deputy S. Power of St. Brelade:

Can I ask the Minister, does he not think it inequitable that we allocate resources to the southerners and the northerners and we do not allocate resources to the Granville route?

Deputy A.J.H. Maclean:

We are more than happy to look at all opportunities relating to increasing trade both on the southern, northern and other routes that open up, if they are, in fact, economically viable. We will be giving good and fair consideration to that in the future.

3.3.5 Connétable M.J. Jackson of St. Brelade:

The Assistant Minister will be aware that there are numerous small charter companies based on the Normandy and Brittany coast and it is their usual habit to come up to the Island. Could he confirm that the Department will be sympathetic to the concept of these companies changing-over crews here and perhaps supporting our local economy through a relaxation of the undertakings law?

Deputy A.J.H. Maclean:

Yes, we will be more than happy to look at it very sympathetically

3.3.6 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will the Assistant Minister assure the House that he, unlike his predecessors, will pay attention and act on the recommendations of the OXERA report - unlike his predecessors who allowed competition on the southern route to result in a crash of one of the carriers?

Deputy A.J.H. Maclean:

Yes, we will look very closely at the OXERA report. I think it might be a little bit hasty to suggest that competition on that route necessarily was the only factor that contributed to that particular operator ceasing its operations.