

FORT REGENT: REDEVELOPMENT

**Lodged au Greffe on 9th November 1999
by the Sport, Leisure and Recreation Committee**



STATES OF JERSEY

STATES GREFFE

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PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion -

- (a) to approve in principle the redevelopment of Fort Regent into a modern community health and sports centre, as described in the accompanying report and illustrated in drawing nos. 9909 AL01-07;
- (b) to charge the Sport, Leisure and Recreation Committee to bring back to the States full details of the proposed redevelopment.

SPORT, LEISURE AND RECREATION COMMITTEE

- Notes:
1. The Finance and Economics Committee recognises the need to maintain the fabric and condition of Fort Regent as well as the need for them to keep up with modern interests. The total out-turn cost of what is currently proposed by the Sport, Leisure and Recreation Committee could amount to £22 million and the Finance and Economics Committee believes that there would be merit in examining the feasibility of embarking upon a phased approach to the project, so that the cost might be spread over a longer period. However, the project or projects would need to be submitted to the normal capital prioritisation procedures in the appropriate year.
 2. The Policy and Resources Committee recognises the need for Fort Regent to be redeveloped so that it can continue to provide a high quality leisure facility for the enjoyment of Island residents and visitors. The Committee however had hoped that this redevelopment could be undertaken in part or in whole through the involvement of private sector interests. While the Committee recognises that no private enterprise interest is forthcoming at present, it believes that this could change if the access were to be improved by the installation of high speed lifts.

The Committee in considering the proposal of the Sport, Leisure and Recreation Committee to spend £14.2 million on the redevelopment of Fort Regent, a sum which excludes fees and which it is thought could easily be exceeded, would wish to draw States members' attention to the fact that -

1. the sum of money required cannot be accommodated in the States Capital Programme up to 2004 at the earliest;
2. if alternative means of funding the proposed redevelopment were found, this would add to the already high level of States capital expenditure and add to the work load of the construction industry, with implications for the population policy.

The Committee would also wish to make it clear that, if the States should decide to adopt the proposition of the Sport, Leisure and Recreation Committee, the provision of the necessary financial resources to carry out the proposed redevelopment would still need to be considered in accordance with the normal resource allocation processes and in the light of States' population policy objectives.

If the States approve the proposal in principle, the Sport, Leisure and Recreation Committee should seriously consider the establishment of a phased programme.

3. The Establishment Committee notes that there are no manpower implications identified in the report and proposition. If the States agree the proposals, any additional staffing requirements which may be identified would only be considered in the light of both the States' policy on manpower and the principles of the Regulation of Undertakings and Development Law, and would not normally be approved unless compensatory savings were made elsewhere.

REPORT

At its meeting held on 21st April 1998 the States referred back P.35/98 (Fort Regent Redevelopment) for further consideration by the Sport, Leisure and Recreation, Policy and Resources and Finance and Economics Committees.

As a result of the States decision, a Steering Group was formed representing the three Committees. The members were -

Senator J.A. Le Maistre, President, Sport, Leisure and Recreation Committee
Senator P.F. Horsfall, President, Policy and Resources Committee
Deputy D.R. Maltwood, Vice-President, Finance and Economics Committee.

In considering the future of Fort Regent the Steering Group developed the following Terms of Reference which were adopted by all three Committees -

“to consider whether the States of Jersey should continue to meet its policy of providing a community pay and play sport and recreation centre and, if so, to examine the most cost-effective means of delivering that service including -

- i. the preferred location for a community pay and play centre;
- ii. funding options including private sector interest;
- iii. management options;
- iv. the relationship between a community pay and play centre and other developments, including the proposed leisure pool complex on the Waterfront”.

The Steering Group explored the possibility of relocating the facilities currently provided on another site, but concluded that the Fort Regent site was the only practical and viable location for an Island community pay and play sports centre. This is consistent with the views of the Planning and Environment Committee and the research undertaken by Roger Quinton Associates (RQA) in 1997.

The Steering Group decided to invite eight leading companies in the United Kingdom which operate in the leisure industry to “express an interest in the development and operation of community pay and play facilities”.

A brief was issued to companies clearly stating that “the Committee will consider all opportunities, including private finance initiatives, lease back, design and build and operating leases”.

The Steering Group was willing to examine alternative proposals and activities, and was not tied to past and present proposals other than some provision must be retained for community pay and play facilities.

With such a broad brief, it was disappointing to note that a nil response was received from eight companies approached. The main reason for lack of interest was the criteria applied by companies when considering investment in new developments. In general, companies require a catchment area of 225,000+ population within a ten-minute drive before considering investment of any significance.

The Steering Group then considered future options for Fort Regent, and concluded that it would be more cost-effective to include a 25m six-lane competition pool with associated diving facilities in the proposed leisure pool development on the Waterfront than to rebuild the existing pool at Fort Regent. This particular proposal was subsequently approved by the States at its meeting held on 27th July 1999.

Fort Regent redevelopment

The decision not to include a pool in the Fort Regent redevelopment provided the opportunity for architects to redesign Fort Regent as a purely dryside facility, to include a modern sports event arena and comprehensive conference facilities for up to 3000 delegates. The key to the successful redevelopment and increased use of the Fort in the future lies in the proposed access lift from Snow Hill.

It has been widely recognized that if the Fort is to continue to be the Island’s premier sports facility and a major tourist attraction for both the casual visitor and sport tourism markets, then it needs to be modernised and the access must be improved.

Historic and conservation issues

The Fort has intrinsic historic and architectural interest, which at present are not being fully exploited. This aspect will be addressed in this scheme and greater use of historic interest of Fort Regent will be made, encouraging visitors to use some of the circulation areas as a heritage trail.

Most external buildings will be demolished to return the Fort to the purity of the original structure. The buildings planned for

demolition include the southern entrance extension in Fort Regent Road, the Quasar building, other buildings in the East Ditch.

There are a number of opportunities for historical interpretation, which will form part of a highly interactive visitor trail.

In addition, the visitor will be able to relax in the Fort's extensive gardens and enjoy some of the best panoramic views of the Island.

Access

The key to the future success of Fort Regent and its development as a tourist attraction is the provision of an attractive, high-speed, high quality means of access from the town. At present the only pedestrian access is through Pier Road carpark and via a lift and series of escalators. The vehicular route, which would remain, is via South Hill and Fort Regent Road.

The proposal is to install two high-speed panoramic lifts at Snow Hill. Customers would be quickly transported from Snow Hill to the top of the cliff. The two 16-person lifts would be capable of transporting 800 passengers per hour.

Visitors would then transfer to a covered walkway, taking them to a Visitor Centre. Customers wishing to participate in an activity would pay at the Visitor Centre, which would also provide information, trail guides, maps, books and souvenirs for visitors coming to see the Fort as an historic monument and a place of beauty.

The introduction of a new access is projected to increase the Fort's income by 15 - 20 per cent.

At Snow Hill itself, the existing public conveniences will be relocated, achieving the creation of an attractive, new open piazza, which will be an important improvement to the St. Helier landscape. Provision will be made for new toilets, and the lift station would incorporate information kiosks.

Centre Ville, the Urban Renewal Sub-Committee and the Tourism Investment Fund Sub-Committee all support the access proposals.

Internal redevelopment

The scheme is intended to upgrade and to redevelop the Fort in a new and exciting way, by creating a workable, attractive sporting and historic facility, which is appropriate to its important, prominent location in the heart of St. Helier. The scale of the building and the all-encompassing sport and recreation facilities to be provided under one roof, develops the idea, originally mentioned in the 1997 RQA report.

Queens Hall

The proposal is to retain the Queens Hall but add an additional floor to provide a permanent international standard indoor bowls facility. The ground floor will remain capable of being used for major sports events, functions and exhibitions.

Gloucester Hall

The Gloucester Hall will be upgraded into a major sports arena, with permanent spectator seating for 1,300 people, with the ability to have a central area with spectator seating for up to 2,000.

The hall can also be converted quickly into an acoustically controlled auditorium with seating for up to 3,000 people for shows and conferences. The Don Theatre and improved adjacent rooms will provide seminar facilities for up to 300 - 400 delegates.

Health and fitness

Immediately inside the Fort's new north entrance will be a large "state of the art" health and fitness facility. This area would have its own reception and create a club atmosphere.

Children's Play

A children's soft play area will be maintained in the Piazza with party rooms and general catering.

Reception

A new reception area will be developed inside the West Bastion area, and the existing external reception building will be removed to expose the original Fort walls.

Catering

There are two catering outlets included in the design, with an option for a third. A sandwich and coffee bar in the Visitor Centre and a café next to the children's play area. A third outlet is proposed for the West Bastion area, which could be developed as a high quality independent restaurant by a private developer.

Club facilities

The new development will provide improved facilities for existing clubs. There are over 60 active clubs using Fort Regent, and the redevelopment proposals, which were presented to them at a special meeting, received their enthusiastic support.

Summary

The proposal to relocate the swimming pool to the Waterfront has enabled the Committee to concentrate on developing a dryside facility at Fort Regent. This will reduce costs and increase income, whilst providing the Island with a modern purpose-built international centre catering for local needs. Just as importantly, this will also provide sport tourism and the tourism infrastructure, including conferences and entertainment.

All the proposals described in this report have received the full support of the Centre Ville Group, the Urban Renewal Sub-Committee, the Tourism Committee and the Tourism Investment Fund Sub-Committee.

The Fort currently enjoys 15,000 visits per week, making it the most popular recreation facility in Jersey. The redevelopment will enable the Committee to significantly increase the number of visits and enhance the visitor experience. With a modern building, costs will be reduced and income increased, while allowing the Committee to maintain social and pricing policies.

Capital costs

The estimated capital costs based on Second Quarter 1999 prices is £14.2 million, excluding fees.