



Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel Trackers Review

WEDNESDAY, 28th MAY 2014

Panel:

Connétable S.W. Pallett of St. Brelade (Chairman)

Connétable M.P.S. Le Troquer of St. Martin

Witness:

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council

[9:30]

Connétable S.W. Pallett of St. Brelade (Chairman):

We are on time and it is supposed to start at 9.30 a.m. and we are just about there now. We were just waiting to see if anybody from the press or sometimes we get one or 2 of the blog site people come in to oversee it. Just one or 2 things I should say, not that it is going to really matter too much this morning. No food and drink obviously apart from the water on the table. Mobile devices, you can have them on, as long as they are on quiet.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

It is switched off, yes.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I do not think again that will be too much of a problem this morning. From the point of view of the tape, just so ... we will be providing a transcript at some stage. We just say who we are. I am Constable Steve Pallett. I am Chairman of the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Really this morning is about trying to find a little bit from you about Trackers and how it works and how you feel about it. We are probably going to let you try to talk a little bit more than us this morning, hopefully in a fairly relaxed way because obviously it has been a success and obviously we want to carry it on being a success. If we start with a general question. How do you feel this new Trackers scheme has benefited the community in terms of providing jobs for young people, for example?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Our overall view is it is a very successful scheme. It has proved very successful in terms of at its inception the Construction Council worked very closely with Penny and the team. We were very positive in terms of pushing a new scheme and the obvious reasons for that were is that it was quite clear that the majority of apprentices that would go on to Trackers would be from a construction related background. I think roughly between 60 and 70 per cent of their intake at a given point are construction related trades, whether it be electricians, builders, painters and decorators; predominantly electricians I believe seems to be a favourite at the moment. The success of it I think can be measured in 2 aspects, which is what we requested at the outset. One was that we wanted quality over quantity, which we believe we are getting. The other one was on the basis of the quality and quantity, we will get higher success rates, you will get more people staying in our industry and they were the 2 requirements that we set out as the main objectives, which we believe are being met by Trackers. If I can wind the clock back a little bit, just to understand how we get to that conclusion. Social Security used a gentleman called Jim Pearce back in 2011 who did a report on the construction skills needs analysis and at the time it was a very positive report but it was based on the construction industry at its peak, so it was a report that represented construction at its peak which was roughly June 2010. If you look statistically, in June 2010 our industry employed 5,500 people, which was roughly 10 per cent of the working population of the Island. Since June 2010 the industry has gone through a very, very severe recession. As we sit here today that equivalent figure has now dropped below 5,000. We have

lost 510 people from our industry in the last 4 years, which is a staggering amount of people because that is effectively 10 per cent. There was a number of concerns associated with us on that one. One was we knew it would happen in terms of there was a problem in our industry with an ageing workforce. Our trades tend to be more the senior years and therefore there was nobody coming through replacing them. So I am talking about people like plasterers, block layers, carpenters, for example. Clearly the work was going to drop off. It was not sustainable at that level, and the construction industry, the workforce will tend to go where the work is and if work is not available on Island then people will leave. That is a fact. So we believe that has happened. Then another issue was the ...

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

In terms of those leaving, is it those that you think were immigrants rather than the local trade, or do you think we have lost some local tradesmen as well?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

I know local people who have left the Island. I have lost 2 of my staff, Jersey born people have gone to Australia. They have immigrated to Australia because they believed prospects and career opportunities were better there. That was a big loss to us because we had invested heavily in training, in terms of taking them through to degree programme and professional qualifications.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

So it is not just people that have come to the Island, we have lost local people as well?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Correct. Absolutely. The majority will possibly be people off Island who will be classed as local in terms of employment legislation, i.e. they have been on Island for greater than 5 years, but yes they would have originated from outside the Island. But people will leave. You have to work, you have to go where the work is. They were the problems we were facing. Plus the apprenticeship programme at the time was not working. It was not under control. There were too many States departments, in our opinion, that were putting their fingers in the pie in terms of trying to manage the process. It was not really a recognised scheme and the pass rate or the success rate of taking people through the scheme were very, very low because people were just being thrown on to the programme, on the basis of: "Well, there is nothing else, why don't you go and be an apprentice, X, Y, Z in construction industry". So when Jim did his report we drafted a skills strategy and one of those was to review the apprenticeship scheme.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Before you come on to the new skills strategy, just consider the old one. Was it achieving what the Construction Council wanted it to achieve? Was it really being used as an apprenticeship scheme because there was a lot of negativity around, it was just a way of finding cheap labour from young people? Was that some of the negatives behind it?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Possibly so. But ultimately it was not supported because the quality of the candidates coming forward was too low so the success rate was too low. So I think that was the root of the problem.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

That was the driver?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes. Then that creates a problem because it is problematic for employers because effectively you are taking on people who are either not interested or not good enough to show the talent to come through, and you are talking about significant time as well as money that is invested in apprentices to take them through their training scheme.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

So it was quality that was really the problem?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Absolutely, correct. So when the Skills Strategy was published back in 2011 we spoke to the States departments and said: Look, we have really got to get a recognised scheme up and running and at the time the States were having the same ideas, which is where Trackers was born. So in a way we were both thinking the same things and we came through. So we worked with Penny quite hard to then develop the intent of the scheme and, like I say, our primary issue at the time was quality over quantity. I do not want to call Trackers elitist but on the basis that it is capped and its success has been such that they have had more applications than there are places available, that has to help quality because you are then selecting the right people to go on the scheme. The other thing we obviously wanted was to ensure that people completed the scheme. So the dropout rate needed to improve and I think that has gone through the roof in terms of the number of people they have had, I believe, off the scheme. That is what I think has also been a success to date, is that it is delivering on those 2 functions. If you come back to where I was just

starting on where we are as a construction industry. If we have lost 500 people from our industry, if you look at the future workload that is projected for construction we can do an analysis based on States capital spend because the information has probably been available. We know historically the private sector will tend to match the public sector in terms of investment, sometimes slightly askewed as in the backroom parallel, but roughly speaking you can make that assessment. If you put that into the mix, we believe, and the Fiscal Policy Panel reported, if you recall, last October, they said: "You have got a skill shortage coming in quarter 4, 2015."

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Do you know what that is likely to be? Have you pitched a figure at them?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

We are trying to analyse that at the moment in 2 respects. One, we are trying to plot the future workload because if we can work out what the spend per annum per employee is, you can roughly work it out. Plus we have just engaged with Skills Jersey, Jim Pearce, to update his report. A questionnaire has literally gone out yesterday and today to engage the industry to start building the next set of information to enable us to project what our future training needs requirements are. But I think there is roughly between 200 and 400 people jobs available by the end of next year. We think ultimately when the industry gets back to its true capacity, as in its not overheating, i.e. it is a sustainable level, I think we will need to replace the 500 people that have left. So I think you can sort of see that in the projects that are coming up, things like the police station, hospital work, housing regeneration programme. Then in terms of the commercial sector you have got Esplanade Quarter, for example, and the other regeneration parts of town that follow. So we as an industry see that as a massive opportunity to take people from school, take people off the unemployed register to train them for what we can see in advance as a skill shortage. We see that as an opportunity, it is not a threat. There are obviously 2 schools of thought on that. One is a concern to, i.e. stop the work because we do not want to overheat the economy.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

We do not want to go that way.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

The other way is to say: "We have got 18 months to plan for this so what should we do in advance" and then we can solve youth unemployment issues in terms of more places on Tracker, we can look at the long-term unemployed in terms of training schemes, and the Construction Council is about to launch a programme with Back to Work in terms of putting a training programme on over

the summer to train 200 people up ready for the construction industry. So there are lots of positives that can be taken from this. And Trackers I think have got a huge part to play in filling that void, that shortfall that we know is projected for the last part of 2015.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

To date, has the Trackers scheme been more aimed at younger people?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Is the intention of trying to widen that out a little bit for those to retrain? Have you looked at that as a possibility?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

My last meeting with the Trackers scheme with Penny was February where we gave some feedback on the success of the scheme. One was that the definition of apprentice, if you read the Oxford English Dictionary, I think, if I am correct, says that it is a person that is taught by a master craftsperson, and it is relative to construction because in the old days that was carpenters, joiners, plumbers, those type of people. The term "apprentice" is now used far and wide and it has been watered down somewhat, which from a construction point of view we have been quite protective because what we do not want is ... it is a bit like driving a car. You can be taught and you can pass a test and drive a car but you do not really start learning to drive until the instructor gets out and you are sat on your own. The way construction apprentices have worked in the past is you do not do that. You keep working with your master craftsperson until such point you have reached a level of competence that you can work on your own. Now we are in a modern world so things will have to change and therefore at the minute there is a push to bring forward people so they can be called a time-served apprentice or qualified, carpenter, electrician or plumber at an early age, and there are some concerns to us to make sure they get the appropriate level of supervision. You cannot just fast track carpenters on a 6-week course over the summer, for example, and spit them out in September and say: "There you go, there are 10 new carpenters." It does not quite work like that. They have to have site experience. But one of the other ways of doing that on a more long-term programme is to bring in vocational training to schools so that in terms of the apprenticeship when they are looking at level 1 qualification, rather than doing it at 16 they start that at 14 to 16, which I believe Highlands have set that course up now. Unfortunately they are not getting a lot of take-up, but that is about promotion of those opportunities in construction at an

earlier age in schools. Last week I gave a presentation to all the careers teachers, Careers Jersey, Trackers were there, Back to Work, Advance to Work, basically every stakeholder is involved in feeding people into construction and one of the things that came out was we have got to get, as an industry and as a collective of stakeholders, we have got to get into the schools at an earlier age so the children are more informed, so when they get to 14 and vocational training is an option, they understand the benefits of going into our industry. I saw that first hand at Le Rocquier School about 3 years ago. Richard Rolfe had set up like an outline or limited vocational scheme and it was fascinating to see because you went in the classroom and you saw kids who were not interested in learning Shakespeare, English language and history, and were not very good. They were disruptive. You put them in the classroom and say: "Right, now wire a plug" you could not get a word out of them. They were fantastic.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

You almost get a spark out of them straightaway.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes, they became adults almost. It was an amazing difference. We see that as a positive part of something to do as a feeder for Trackers is to get that level 1 qualification in at an earlier age in school. Then what you have is you have got 16 year-olds who have got a good idea of what they want to do. I mean at 16 I did not know what I wanted to do because I did not have much guidance. I worked that out over the next 2 years. The more information we can give to kids, make a more informed decision going forward then we are going to get a better success rate in terms of taking people through the qualifications and coming out the other end.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

All young people have got skills in one way, shape or form so it is just trying to identify the skills they have got maybe at a younger age and trying to funnel them down a route that may suit them a little bit better.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Correct.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

You are doing that from your end?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes.

[9:45]

The Connétable of St. Martin:

I mean the young people, how do they know they want to be an electrician or plumber? Are you putting that into the schools?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

At the presentation last week that was the feedback we got, we have got to do more work at the years 9 and 10, I think it is, to get them more informed in terms of that choice going forward. Yes, we have a lot of work to do on that.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

What trades do you do then? We have said carpenter, electrician, plumbers. In the construction part what are you offering for young people? What can they go to? Because you are going to be restricted as well. You said more electricians may be needed.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes, again one of the questions I often get faced when I go and talk to different groups is what do you need? It is a very difficult question to answer. That is why we have just launched a survey at the moment. When I call it a training needs review, it is not just saying you need literacy, I.T. (information technology) and, say, numeric competencies. It is about what do we need? Do we need plasterers, do we need block layers, do we need carpenters? Because we have got to try and give a bit more information but we need to find a way of giving a bit more information so that people understand which areas we have got problems to fill in the future.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Have you identified any areas where you have got specific skills that are missing at the current stage?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

We know roughly, if you look at the site activity in terms of, say, our supply chain, we know that block layers are diminishing in numbers, we know carpenters are diminishing in numbers. We knew electricians were but that has gone through the roof in the last two years. That I think is a good plus of Trackers. They seem to be overwhelmed by electricians. Plumbers, we do not think there is a problem at the moment but again we are envisaging there is a problem coming up in the future.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Is it also management skills?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes, management skills, absolutely. That is an interesting one for me because it is the management skills that I have asked Trackers to invest in as another stream of apprenticeships. Yes, we need site managers, engineers, architects, quantity surveyors. They are managers who at the minute do not form part of the Trackers scheme because Trackers is all about trades, it is not about management skills. But if we accept the wider definition of apprentices then when we employ, for example, at Camerons 16 year-olds, 17 year-olds as trainee site engineers or site managers or surveyors there is no reason why they should not have the benefit of a structured programme like Trackers.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Have the Construction Council worked with Highlands in the past to create some of these skills packages, some sort of offer in those type of training courses?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

The answer is yes because Ian Greenwood of Highlands is overseeing the staff. We have always kept in touch so their degree programme is very good. They have a B.T.E.C. (Business and Technology Education Council) programme, what I call still H.N.C. (Higher National Certificate), which I believe is still correct, and their degree. You now have got a package where the majority of management skills can be learned on Island. That is good because if you think about it they need a minimum demand from the courses. That is fantastic so again we at Camerons, for example, 9 of our staff have completed their degree programme in construction management in the last 3 years, which is fantastic for me. That is brilliant. They do it in a 2-year programme locally rather than 3-year, doing it as remote studies.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

We have seen that. Some of your Construction Council Awards, some of the benefits and some of the young people coming through and they achieve quite high levels as well.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes, because they are associated with South Bank and they are getting some of the highest grades in the whole of South Bank University, which is fantastic. It is really, really good. But when you look at degree programmes and higher level education you still have got to go back to grassroots because it is like a pyramid. Where is the feeder for those degrees? It sort of comes back full circle that most management people in construction, in terms of site management, project management and site engineering, all come from a trade background. So they have all got experience of doing an apprenticeship in the first instance, for example, regardless of whether it is plumbing, electrician, carpentry, et cetera. Then they will get to an age of 21, 22, where they think: "I do not want to be on the tools all my career" and we pick up quite a few people who say: "Look, can I come and do a management training programme with you?" We say: "Fantastic." Because they have got that knowledge of site it really helps them both in their studies and in their professional development in their career. It is a really good breeding ground for management in the future.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Something I touched on ten minutes ago in terms of retraining. With your discussions with Social Security do you think the opportunities for maybe somebody in their 30s to retrain could be something that could be done through the Trackers scheme or do you see it purely as something where the people are coming out of school and they are fed in through that direction?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

It should be able to cope with them. But they are probably the hardest people we have faced in terms of how we accommodate their needs for the construction industry. For example, we will get a lot ... we find at careers fairs and through work in terms of approach, you will get a lot of people who say: "I have worked in the finance industry of XYZ but I am not interested. I do not want to stay in the finance industry." You think: "That is great, because at the minute construction is quite a viable career option." But when people are mature, say 25 plus, it is slightly problematic to accommodate them because they are used to obviously the salary and a lifestyle and when you put them on to an apprenticeship scheme or a management training programme or another, they have got to make a change. That becomes your first stumbling block. The reality is, yes you can

offer it. It just becomes the practicality of whether they can accept it. So that is probably our most difficult area to attract people to construction.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

You made an interesting point earlier on about capping the number that have been coming through the Trackers scheme. Obviously you do want to keep the quality high so you have got good skills coming through young people. Do you see that being a problem if that cap was to come off and it was opened up to a wider number of young people?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

I do not think so, no. But it has to be done in a controlled fashion without the loss of quality over quantity. I think what is important going forward, Trackers has to be something that grows and develops and evolves over time. It cannot just become: "That is what it is and that is what it is going to be for the next 10 years." I think it has to change with the way we are going. One of the things that has to change is the numbers of people because what you have got is a very well-run scheme, a very well managed scheme because you have got the process of mentors, for example. So when people have wobbles, which everybody does, there is always someone there to catch them, give them guidance and advice, put them back on the track, as it were, and get them going again. In reality that is the perfect model that you would want for all apprenticeships, is it not? In my opinion and the Construction Council's opinion, we think there probably should be one recognised apprenticeship scheme that covers all people because at the moment at Highlands they will put on a course and you will have some people from Trackers. Then you have got other people who are called apprentices who are not on Trackers, who are just working with dad or got a job with a firm, but they do not necessarily have that support work around them to enable them to succeed. They are probably good guys or girls. So I think it is a very difficult situation in terms of where do you draw the line? I think ultimately there ought to be one recognised apprenticeship scheme on the Island. But you have got to respect the quality over quantity because you have got to keep getting ... if you put 100 people through you do want to get 90 people or something like that out the other end.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Are you saying there is still a mix between Trackers and other apprenticeship schemes?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

And that is having a negative effect?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

I would not say it is having a negative effect ...

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

In terms of quality.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

But the people that are not on Trackers are obviously in, effectively, an uncontrolled situation. They go there by their own decision making. Firms will sponsor them in the old fashioned way effectively and therefore I would guess ... if you looked at statistically how many of those people are passing the courses and at what grade, I would imagine it is less than what people are achieving on Trackers.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Is that funded in any way, any of the other apprenticeship schemes?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

I am just trying to think because there are quite a few different schemes out there now for ... it is not funded as an apprenticeship scheme to my knowledge but obviously you have got things like the new youth employment issue has just come out, which was launched last week. You will probably find that side of people will ultimately become apprentices, as it were, probably come September time in terms of enrolment. So that might be another source of potential funding.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

When you complete the training, I mean you said earlier on there are different lengths of time for an apprenticeship.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

There used to be. It is now the same effectively for construction.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

The same being?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Another interesting question is are they qualified when they complete level 2 or level 3? Level 3 is the bit that takes them into management training effectively. We have always advocated they ought to go through to that level 3 at the moment. They think they can go through to level 2 and level 3 becomes an option, so we think level 3 would be a good basis because that effectively completes the cycle. Plus it then enables them to go on to further education ultimately through to the degree programme if needs be.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Just specifically on Trackers, obviously it is capped at a certain number at the present time. Is that because of the resources and funding available as well?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

I believe so. We were not party to how they came up with the numbers. I think they have increased the numbers in the last 6 to 12 months. Because the original scheme I think was capped at 50.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

It is about 100-and-something now, isn't it?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yeah, it is more than that now because again they have evolved it and it takes even more disciplines as part of the scheme.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

So resources could be one issue in terms of the funding for numbers?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Potentially so. I mean that would be a discussion with the Education Department in terms of the supervision.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

We have got a meeting planned with the Minister for Education. In terms of mentors, obviously the mentors is a very important part of the scheme and I think you have already said to us without that opportunity to fall back and get that advice and experience there is an opportunity you are going to get people that are going to fail. Have you had enough mentors come forward and help and be part of the scheme?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes, we have not been, as an industry, asked to provide mentors. I mean they get mentoring in terms of their employer. What the Trackers scheme will do is they will work with the employers when they are trying to match with apprenticeships to make sure that the company and the person is suitable relative to the apprentice and vice versa, so you have got that ...

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

That is an independent process though, is it not? Independent of the company itself?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

It is fairly independent. I believe it is flexible, i.e. the companies can approach Trackers and say: "Look, we are looking for an apprentice" or vice versa. Sometimes Trackers have phoned us and said: "I have got 2 guys who are looking for carpentry, do you know anybody who is interested?" It is just a work in process in terms of trying to match people up. Obviously the Trackers team themselves offer a mentoring thing in terms of making sure that they assess them on a regular basis. They meet with the employer, go through any problems, obstacles, issues, that type of ...

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

But the mentor with an apprentice they are independent of the company? They would not be part of that company?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes, because effectively they will be given a line manager to report to and be taught by. Yes, correct.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

This is a wider question, I suppose; are enough apprenticeships being offered by local companies at the present time? Do you think there is a shortage there? Will people be prepared to come forward and offer apprenticeships?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

I think there is definitely a will to do it. But I do not think people are quite making that mental leap and committing to it at the moment.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

What is preventing ...?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Because whilst our industry appears to be coming out of recession the biggest thing we suffer in construction is effectively projects coming online in a timely fashion so, for example, when you analyse the forward work stream, quite typically that always drifts and for businesses to then invest in training that becomes very difficult, because if you are sitting there thinking: "Well these jobs are coming up here and we will be pricing work here" and you try and put your structure in terms of staff development around that, the tenders might not come out for a while or the tenders, once you have won the contract, sometimes they can take up to 6 months before they start on site. So you have got lots of juggling problems associated with how you then manage your staff. I think that is quite problematic. At all levels it is very difficult dealing with the uncertainty on that. It is something we have pushed, as the Construction Council, to try and gauge with the States in terms of the management of the supply of work in a more timely fashion so that there is a bit more predictability to build the confidence in terms of investment in skills training.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Is that confidence beginning to return?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

I think it is beginning to return, yes. But it needs to be developed further before there is that final leap of faith.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Has there been enough discussion between the Construction Council and Government in the past about work streams and timings because I think the answer is probably going to be no, but how could you see that being improved?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

The Construction Council meets with Treasury on a 6-monthly basis for an update session. A part of that is to give feedback, like what I am reporting now in terms of where are projects coming onstream, et cetera. We do believe that we ought to investigate forming a construction industry board which would have representatives of the industry and the States in terms of the various States departments because obviously if you look the States, Treasury and Property Holdings are the big asset owner. Clearly Health have got a big development programme. Housing, even though they are going to be incorporated effectively, are still owned by the States, will have a big development programme. Education likewise with the schooling programmes, things that are coming up there.

[10:00]

So when you look at the States departments they are all very active clients and we think we should bring everybody together as representatives on a central board to try and help manage work. What we do not want, we do not want an overheating construction industry. But what we do not want is the depths of the recession that we have just experienced. In our opinion that recession possibly could have been avoided if some of the projects that we know need to be built could have been brought forward earlier. That is not a criticism of the States of Jersey because they have helped immensely with a lot of the fiscal strategies and stimulus that they have invested into construction but there are projects out there that could have been brought forward, which would have served the community.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Sort of smoothed you through that period?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes, absolutely. Construction typically does that and what we want to do is pull it like a piece of string and make it do more like that because long term that is where you will get the confidence in businesses and then again, coming back to skills training and investment, there will be more certainty going forward.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

In terms of obviously the group that you chair - you mentioned vocational training - have you been in any discussions with Education around how that is going to work in terms of bringing that forward?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

We have got a meeting with Highlands next week because they have already introduced the scheme. But what they have actually got is a lack of demand at the moment but that I think is more of a marketing type exercise which is to go into the schools, as I say, to talk to the earlier year groups to promote that.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I think it is probably true of the hospitality industry as well, there has been a little bit of a stigma around young people going into the industry. Where do you see your role in maybe changing that?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Construction definitely suffers from that stigma and we have all seen the sights of block layers on building sites and things like that, and it really is not a representative of what construction is about. The level of professionalism and investment, skills that are all behind that point where the block layer is laying the block is phenomenal. We have all been involved in construction projects and we have all got an understanding of how it works, right from architects, financing with banks, lawyers, accountants, there is a huge array of different people that are involved in the construction process. We have got to be able to sell that a bit better as an industry. There is an opportunity though because finance is not quite as attractive as it used to be and therefore people are looking at that. Do not forget we are not talking about massive numbers. I know I talk about a shortage of about 500 people and we are doing the exercise to try and break that down to say what is that. Is that 50 managers and 450 trade or is it 300 trade, 200 managers? We do not know, we are trying to piece that together at the moment. We run a work shadow scheme very similar to the I.o.D. (Institute of Directors) but it is construction based. I go round the schools every year and talk, and every year we are seeing more and more people that are interested in construction related career opportunities, like architecture and engineering, for example, which is fantastic. It is really good. This year we have placed 15 students on the work shadow scheme, which is the highest number we have had. That is fantastic as far as I am concerned. Because if we can do 10 or 15 every year then, say, three-quarters of those ultimately go on to do their degrees and come back to the

Island then all of a sudden, I know we have got a time lag but in 5 years' time then we will start filling those voids, which I think is really good.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

You see it as a huge opportunity for young people where at the moment there seems to be a gap for young people, maybe certainly those that are less academic, there is a gap there to be filled and a lot of our young people could be filling those gaps?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes, correct.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Rather than us importing those skills?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Correct. Absolutely. Now is the time to be looking at it in terms of planning for something we know is going to happen rather than just getting there going: "What are we going to do?" Because we do not want an overheating construction industry. What we want is a structured progressive industry that helps training and develop local people. That is really important.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

In terms of the scheme itself, are there any future requirements that you think this scheme needs either resource-wise or sort of skills that you need within the scheme itself to help to progress the scheme forward?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

The feedback we are getting in February, the one stream we think we need to bring in is the management side on to the apprenticeship scheme. Then what we really do need is to complete this report that we are doing at the moment with Skills Jersey, which will be published for the end of June because that will give us a lot of background information. It will give us a lot of accurate information from the industry itself that we can then use to review where are we, what are we doing and what do we need to do and plan for the future. I think it is a really important piece of work that is currently being undertaken, because that will set us up then for the next 3 to 5 years going forward, and it will help us in the industry across all spectrums because we are not just talking about Trackers as an apprenticeship scheme, we are talking about attracting more females

into construction, for example. Only 6 per cent of our workforce is female which is very, very low. People with disabilities we need to attract into construction as well. There is no reason why we cannot do that. So there are all sorts of avenues that we need to look at that will be formed from this report.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

You mentioned disabilities there. Do you think there is enough opportunity at Highlands to allow people to ... do you think the opportunity is there to allow people to come in that have got specific disabilities that you could use within ... those people that you could use within the industry?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes, we did some work last year with J.E.T. (Jersey Employment Trust) to talk about those type of issues and clearly building sites, per se, are complicated areas of work. There are health and safety considerations, there are all sorts of issues there. But as long as that is understood that is fine. Then when you talk about people with disabilities you have just got to assess what those are and then you can work out where they are best suited to work because construction is not all about building sites. Architects work in offices. Building contractors work in offices. There are all sorts of jobs there to be done ...

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Or even management as well.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Correct, yes. Absolutely. So we are not just talking about a building site environment. We have got office environments as well.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

What funding comes from the States at the moment to run this? What sort of funding is coming to run Trackers? There should be more money probably.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

There probably should be. I do not know what the number is.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Where does the money go? The mentors?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

The money goes to the apprentice, does it not?

The Connétable of St. Martin:

And then sells, yes, certainly. But paying for mentors as well and the administration of the whole programme?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

In terms of the mentors that are under the Trackers programme, yes, I would imagine it will do. There will be a cost there. But in terms of the business, the business effectively does not receive any money because the money is paid to the apprentice to fund them through their college course for example, and bits and pieces.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Should the business get some?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

That is a very interesting point because that is the way it was done historically so the company would pay its ... I think it was roughly £3,000 per annum that was then used to pay for a number of things. One being the course fee, one being basic materials. So if you are a carpenter they need to be brought tools and things like that. The other was to ... it was almost like a compensation, if you know what I mean, because apprentices - I will be very careful the way I say this ...

The Connétable of St. Martin:

I was an apprentice once.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

They are not very useful in their first 6 to 12 months in terms of earning money because they need a lot of time to be taught how to do things. So it was recognised in that way. That has changed a lot with Trackers. Trackers is taking the money away from the employer and is giving the money to the apprentice. In theory the money is the same and in theory most of the money should get spent in similar areas. Course fees have gone up in the last 2 and a half years at Highlands so there is probably more money goes on the course fee. But then to a point that is not a bad thing because I think that helps in the quality/quantity argument. From a quantity point of view, if you

are constantly giving money out people will take people on, are they really then spending the time needed with them because they are thinking: "That is all right because I am getting money for doing this." By taking it away, if that employer then turns round and says: "Well, actually I am only going to take one new apprentice instead of 3" but the one person is a good guy and he then succeeds then in a way you could argue that that is probably the better way of doing it. I know through our business in the past, going back a number of years, if you took 16 year-olds on, for every 5 that you would probably offer a job to there would be one who might still be with you 2 years later. The dropout rate is too low. For the time that is invested as well as the cash it is too low. But if you have got 16 year-olds who are more informed and educated in terms of a career opportunity and you get a success rate higher then it is better all round, is it not?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Have you been able to calculate the success rate since Trackers started in terms of those that are staying in the industry and succeeding?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Penny has got that information, Trackers have got that information. It is very high. It is very, very high. I do not know what it is off the top of my head but they do have that information.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I mean it is not bad, you can never get too much of a good thing. Is there a possibility with this though that there is a limit to the number that you could have on a scheme like this and carry on with that high success rate?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

I think that is a risk. I think I stand by the comment I made earlier which is I think ultimately we ought to have one recognised apprenticeship scheme across the board. I think the caveat to that is the point you raise, which is you cannot allow the quality to drop on that basis. You have got to maintain it because otherwise if we water it down and thin the process out then we are at risk of going back to where we were 4 years go on the old scheme where effectively there were too many people, it was uncontrolled and the dropout rate was incredibly high. That is not what we want to do.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Maybe you can answer this more from your own company's perspective but what sort of feedback have you had from those that have been in the scheme itself?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

The guys I spoke to they think it is good. They like it. It is a good programme.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Do they find it is the support that they like? What aspects of the scheme do you find compared with the old scheme, that they sort of said?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Because it has got structure around it. I know businesses like it as well because effectively they are not just on their own trying to run the apprentices, for example. Particularly some say the electrical firms I know on the Island. You might run 2 or 3 apprentices. By having that additional structure and support that is outside of their business as well, it is really beneficial to them because they are not having to spend their time focused on doing that. They can allow other people to make sure, you know, do attendance records, go to college and they have done this, they have done that, et cetera, so I think that is a really important part of it.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

With an experienced mentor coming in, slightly moving away from just the apprentice, but have they offered any advice ... have they seen opportunities to offer advice to companies for example and the way that they operate. Do you think there are some benefits with that as well? Or do you think they are meant to stay away from that?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

No, I think they probably do do. I cannot evidence that but one of the things that came through I think on the first phone call that went through was there was a lot of father and son businesses, which my take would be we were in a recession therefore: "What is my son going to do? Well I will take him on and I will train him up." That is a really good thing.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Guilty.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes, I think it is a really good thing. They probably will benefit from being able to go to somebody and say: "Well, can you provide me with the support and the guidance?" because if you are

running your own business as a one-man band all you are thinking about is where is your next job, getting your bills paid, running around. If somebody else is thinking about training, sorting the college out, sorting the fees out, getting the books, buying the tools, whatever it is, I think it has got to be a huge help.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

In some ways it has taken some of the stress and demands away from the employer themselves.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes. If you look at construction industry there are 1,280 companies that are registered as working in construction. I think 85 per cent of those are businesses that employ 5 people or less, and while it is 5 people or less it is predominantly one-man or 2-man, so that is a huge percentage of the industry. That is where a lot of these apprentices will go. It is not necessarily the big companies that we all know about because we see the site boards around, it is a lot of these smaller companies, which is where apprentices really need to get into. Trackers, I think, has to be a major benefit to those small businesses in terms of their ability to then take the apprentices on.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Do you have any idea how acute the current skills gap is because I have heard from one or 2 companies I know that are ... certainly one electrical company on the management side that could not get the sort of member or quality of staff they wanted and they are looking outside the Island. How acute do you think it is currently and do we need to move forward and find the skills we need fairly quickly now?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

We do. Without a shadow of a doubt, yes, correct. There is a limited pool of good people on the Island and one of the problems that will happen very shortly, if it has not already happened, is companies will start poaching staff from each other because there is not this conveyor belt of fresh talent coming through. There is a little bubble where we have missed a sector of people and it does take a bit of time. If you are talking about in 18 months' time I think you have got a realistic timeframe and a conveyor belt and Trackers is part of that conveyor belt because if they have got 50 or even ... sorry, you said it was 100 people roughly, 60 per cent, so 60 people a year coming through Trackers, they have been going now 2 and a half years, so another 18 months' time that is quite a lot of people they have fed into the industry to solve that 500 people process. So I think that conveyor belt is working really well. The management training programme is the one that is suffering the most. There is an acute shortage of site manager, site engineers and quantity

surveyors and, if I am being honest, I think part of it is because a number of companies have not bothered to invest and all of a sudden they realise they have got busy so they have gone: "Where do we get people from?" So the easy option is just to get existing staff from other businesses. So there will be an acute shortage without a shadow of a doubt.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Is Trackers going to be flexible enough to deal with specific skills shortage?

[10:15]

I think of one, for example, which I have heard is currently an issue and that is around block layers. Do you think it is going to be flexible enough to be able to deal with that in the short term? Because I think you have already said it yourself, you are not going to teach a block layer to lay blocks in 2 or 3 months. It is a skill in itself.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Correct. No, is the answer. I think Trackers will struggle to solve that problem but I think we have got to tackle that once we have got this report and we can identify it because I think we all know it, we just need to see it. Then we can put a strategy around doing that. It is not an attractive career to go into. It is hard work, the blocks are heavy.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

It is not much fun in the winter.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Correct. It is not that an attractive piece of work. People like being electricians and plumbers because it is seen as being like hierarchal, sort of the higher end of the trade. Fine, that is great.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

And it is not weather related as well, I think which is something people ...

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Carpentry is fairly well supported and while there is an input there people are pretty excited by carpentry because it is very practical, it is hands on. Block laying as a skill, yes, correct. Another one is plastering as well, for example, where you might not need to do a 3-year apprenticeship as

a plasterer but again we can see that that has been a shortage coming through in the not too distant future. These are the type of programmes we have got to have a chat with Highlands about how they can put that on. They have got their own set of issues which I think somebody needs to talk to Highlands about their facilities up there because clearly they are in need of some investment up there at the moment. Their facilities are tired and dated, not necessarily fit for purpose for what we could do a modern training programme. I think that is a separate issue. Highlands needs to be talked to about providing fit for purpose, modern training facilities going forward.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Have you already started that process in terms of facilities up there, because I know the facilities reasonably well? Like you say, they have not been updated for some period of time now.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

I know Highlands have started that discussion to try and talk about funding, et cetera, but I was up there a few weeks ago because we were talking about this Back to Work programme. Back to Work have set a challenge of preparing 200 people who are currently unemployed and have no experience in construction ready to come into the construction sector come October, November, December, and we have now established a training programme which we are hoping to announce and go live next week. It is great because that is all about taking people, giving them basic skills and when they turn up to an employer and say: "Have you got any jobs?" if they can turn round and say: "Look, I have been on this recognised training course, I have learnt how to do X, Y and Z" I think more than 50 per cent of employers will probably turn around and give them a chance. At the minute they just get the door slammed in their face because they have got no experience. But we went up to Highlands to talk to them about running the course and there are lots of practical reasons why we couldn't go there, because the school is still on holidays, and things like that. But that was my first glimpse of the facilities up there and they are bulging at the seams up there at the moment. They really are. They are really struggling with the facilities they have got. If you talk about investing money on skills training and things like that, part of that investment has to be in the training provider. That is what Highlands are, they are a skills and training provider. So we ought to think about how we can help them and give them the facilities to help improve the people who will go through the system. They have a huge amount of people on the construction programme.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I was going to ask about that. I mean has there been a problem in the past where not knowing what the future work demands are going to be that we just send students up there without a real

idea of the sort of skills we are going to need and we have just been throwing them through plumbing courses and electrical courses and we do not really know what the shortage is?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes, is the answer. The reason why I did a presentation to careers teachers last week, and it is not necessarily being critical of them, because if we do not tell them what we need then they are not going to be able to tell their children what they need. But it would appear careers teachers will take an easy option and say: "You are not very good at G.C.S.E. (General Certificate of Secondary Education) so why do you not go and do a foundation course of construction at the Highlands College?" So Highlands College do get, in a positive sense, tick boxed. They are very popular for their course. We have got to look at that a different way and say: "Hang on a minute, are these guys really fit for purpose coming on the course? How have they ended up there? Have they had the right advice and guidance? Is the course then set up for what is correct for them?" Because otherwise you are just storing up a problem for another year, are you not?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Really you want to know what the end product is going to be.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Absolutely, yes. So instead of having a problem at 16 we have a problem at 17. Or sometimes worse case you are having a problem at 18. Trying to deal with a 17 and 18 year-old who does not know what he wants to do and has just ambled through a course for 2 years, I think it gives Jersey a big youth problem. I think that is a major issue.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Would you agree it stores it up?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes, absolutely. Correct.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

So you get to a certain stage at 18 or 19 where that is where the problem is going to manifest itself.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Correct, yes. I get plenty of C.V.s (curriculum vitae) from kids who are 19 who turn round and realise they have just lost 3 years because they have ambled around. They have got qualifications, this, that and the other, but they have got no career. They have got no orientation. All of a sudden at 19 they have switched on and gone: "Hang on a minute, I need to get some structure. I need a job actually. I need a career development" and there are quite a lot of children like that around.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

But rewinding that back what you are saying, and you said it earlier on, is that vocational set up needs to be in place at a fairly early stage if you want to make the most of their potential.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Correct, yes. Because I think it is beneficial to the schools. To be fair the schools support that. What we have got to work on is now that they have got the structure in place, we have got to help them sell that, promote it, like I say to the school children, and that was the biggest message that came out when we did a presentation last week was we need to work together more to get into the schools at the earlier age to give them better information so they can make more informed decisions going forward, because I think it will be popular, certainly from the evidence I saw at Le Rocquier School a few years ago where it was sold properly. You can see the evidence is there. Highlands have set themselves up as the central point to the schools that feed into Highlands. They go to Highlands to do the course. Again, we will come back to it, we have got to make sure they have got the facilities there fit for purpose to then receive those children and make sure that they are in the right environment to learn and develop.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Do you think that there has to be a change in ... and I do not mean this in a negative way but young people's expectations of the sort of jobs that are available in Jersey, because I mean going back 20, 30 years, I know when I was coming out of school if you did not get a job you went in the finance industry because there were all those jobs available. Do you think people need to be more realistic about what jobs are available in Jersey now? Also there is a message in educational I think to get across to young people that there is a benefit of going into the construction industry. Like I say, you have got to sell it for what it is, but do you think there needs to be a little bit lower expectations about what jobs are available here? I include the hospitality industry in that as well as a potential source of jobs for young people.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

I think the overall answer to that question is, yes. Most of my experiences are talking to 6th form students because that is where I go when I talk about the work shadow scheme because it is specifically aimed at 6 form students. Yes, of course when you go to places like Vic and J.C.G. (Jersey College for Girls) and people like that, they are not necessarily sitting there promoting the construction industry as a viable career. However, when you look at 2 disciplines, as architecture and engineering, they do because engineering is very science based so your maths and sciences are picked up there so they quite like that, and architecture is obviously a craft and it is an art in itself. So that is okay. What we are trying to do is break that down into better levels and say: "Hang on a minute, there are more than 2 jobs in construction. What about this? What about that?" So we are now developing with the senior schools to try and give them more information about what other options are there. But clearly we are competing with the finance sector. It is clear as day, they promote the finance sector, the high level student. Hautlieu is ...

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

But even for the high level students, some of the mechanical engineering sides, there are opportunities within there as well which maybe are not really put across that well.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Correct, yes. It was quite interesting because ... do you know what fracking is? It is an extraction of gas by vibration. It is big in America and it is very unpopular in the U.K. (United Kingdom) at the moment.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I think it will be unpopular here as well.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes, but someone has clearly been into Victoria College and sold fracking because when I went and did a presentation out of 8 students, 7 of them said: "I am going to be a fracking engineer." But whether that was just in the press and it was popular.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Taking the "r" out.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

But that is quite good because they are aware of resources, energy, things like that, oil, gas. They are big business around the world.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

It is big money.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes, absolutely. I know we talk about we want to keep the skills local but I have seen it ... I am getting to that stage in life now where my trainees from years ago are now all resurfacing. But they will go off Island, they will do their degree, they will get work experience wherever it may be in the U.K. or overseas, but the point when they want to settle down and have a family they always return to Jersey. When you bring somebody back at the age of 27 to 30 or whatever, they come back with a wealth of experience which is very valuable to us as local businesses and other local people who do not have the benefit of then leaving the Island and getting those experiences. So they are really good. When we talk to those students they really are the ones of the future but they will come back at some point, they always do. That is really good because you have got to look at all different sectors, have you not?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

In terms of students going through the Trackers scheme, and also what is happening in the past with the old apprenticeship schemes, how have companies dealt with students that go through this training process, and then leave those companies? Because I think there have been issues in the past where employers have been prepared to invest in young people and lost them, they have decided to travel when they have finished their schemes or something like that, do you think there is a role to play or should there be a role to play within the Trackers scheme that tries to tie students in at least to give the employer an opportunity to benefit from that student?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes. Very simply the answer is yes. It has to be mutually beneficial and without doubt, yes, we do that when we invest in people who go on a degree programmes, then we come to an agreement that they will work for us for a minimum of 2 years following that degree so that we, as a business, can get some benefit from them and vice versa. Some people have left and all they do is reimburse a percentage of the fees.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Buy their way out and someone else ...

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes, absolutely. That is done on a fair and reasonable basis which I think that is acceptable, that is fine. So, yes, I think there has to be some ... it has to be mutually beneficial to employee and employer. I think ...

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Is that part of the current Trackers scheme? Are students in any way tied into their employer or is that really on a case by case basis?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

You would have to check that with Penny. I cannot remember specifically in the terms of reference for the apprentices. There is another issue which is quite closely related, which is employment law, and that has been counterproductive in terms of the commitment of employers to employees because employment law obviously once you have hit a 6-month period then effectively you are then into all sorts of complication. If they fail in their performance you have got disciplinary procedures, a redundancy process and that. That has actually had a big effect on construction. I am not going to say construction is right but obviously in the old days it was hire and fire, was it not? You started on a Monday morning, you might get laid off on a Friday night. That is the way the industry worked because it is up and down, up and down, up and down.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Have you had discussions with government in terms of trying to make that a little bit more flexible for employers?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes, we have given some feedback through. Yes. One of the initiatives, it was last year, was it not, when they were looking at a 6-month period, extending it out to 12 because in the U.K. they have changed it from 12 to 24 now, and Guernsey works on a 12-month. But there was a consultation last year with the Minister for Social Security on extending that period and we gave representation on that but the decision was to retain it for 6 months. It is a very difficult argument.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

But you think that needs to be reviewed?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

I think it does need to be reviewed because you have got to find ways of encouraging employers to commit and what they cannot cope with is if they do ultimately get a problematic employee it is an expensive process and statistically the employment law has shown that it is in favour of the employee not the employer.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

So presumably that is potentially putting potential employers off taking apprentices on?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes, correct.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Is that the feedback you have had from companies?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes, definitely had that feedback from memberships. So the scheme they launched last week, for example, the youth initiative where they pay £6,500 on the basis you offer a full-time contract. It will be very interesting to see how that is taken up. I hope it is successful. I just hope employers do not turn round and say: "Well, what are the risks associated with that?" because effectively you are into the same obstacles in terms of disciplinary process, so that would be very interesting to see how that works. If that does work then maybe that is okay. But clearly when you are in a recessionary time and companies want to be more flexible. I do know of companies that have gone bust because they just could not afford to make their staff redundant and there are a number of reasons for that. They may have over committed on staff or the work they thought was going to start has got delayed for whatever reason. All of a sudden they are left paying wages and they just cannot do anything about it. That flexibility has gone. That has affected a number of subcontractors predominantly who need the greater degree of flexibility. There is definitely flexibility in businesses.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Michel, have you got anything?

The Connétable of St. Martin:

No. I think what you raised about Highlands is quite interesting. I have always had concerns about it. I think they are just hiding or delaying the problem.

[10:30]

By having more and more people and keep expanding, from what you were saying before, you have got a 1,000 young people up there or more, they have still got to come out somewhere. Having been part of the Highlands training up at States Farm in fact, I did a proper apprenticeship and day release, something was going on. Now it just seems you can leave school, you have got nowhere to go, you are not going to go to university so you are going to do a one-year, 2-year course and then change while you are up at Highlands.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes, correct.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

I think personally the Island has got a problem coming.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

I think it has already got a problem. I just do not know whether it has quite surfaced yet. There was talk about the lost generation of people who have just been allowed to meander. Those people are out there somewhere and whether they have now gone to a level where they are mature enough that they can get back into it by a different means or whatever, I am not sure, but I think Jersey has already got its problem. What you do not want is it to become even worse and bigger and I agree with you. It needs to be addressed in terms of that lower level of entry into Highlands and make sure that people are going there for the right reasons, doing the right courses, got the right support network around them, getting the right structure, got the right facilities, all these things contribute to the success.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I think you have identified it yourself from what you said previously. I think there have been students that have been meandering around Highlands taking course upon course and obviously you get to a point where they have to leave that system and there has not been a job for them. One last question, I suppose it is what it boils down to, do you think there are enough opportunities for young people at the moment to access the Trackers scheme?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

From what I was told last week I would say yes, because they were oversubscribed on their latest intake, which I think is good because that is what you want in a way.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Are there enough opportunities though because obviously if it is oversubscribed that would suggest there are not enough opportunities to get on the scheme?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes, and it keeps coming back to this quality and quantity and about whether we ought to have one recognised training programme which still respects the quality and the standards of the Trackers.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Is that the one thing you think needs to happen, is we need to have the one scheme?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes, I think we need to roll it out because it seems ... that is why I do not want to call Trackers elitist because in my opinion it is not. It had to start somewhere and its starting point was we have got funding for 50 places. That was its starting point. Its evolution has to keep growing. I can only see that as being the right thing to do because it would be a bit odd, would it not, if you have got a classroom of 30 kids up at Highlands of which 10 are on the Trackers scheme and the other 20 are not.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

It does not make sense, does it, really?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Not really. I know there are issues about funding, the cost and all that, which is a separate issue, but ultimately if they are good guys and they all fit the quality bracket should they not all have the benefit and the opportunity to succeed by having the right support network around them, which is what ultimately Trackers is trying to provide.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

So in many ways it is a support network that needs the resource?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Potentially so, yes.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I have nothing else. Is there anything you want to add that we have missed or you think that is important?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

No, I think I have covered ... I mean it is very timely to come and talk to you about this because, like I say, we started to work with Skills Jersey at the beginning of the year to reappoint Jim Pearce to do this report, which to us will be the single most valuable bit of information that we have got because it is a true representation and input from the industry.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

When do you say that report may be out?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

We are trying to get it ready for the end of June. I think that is massive. That will set up our skills strategy then going forward for the next 3 to 5 years. The previous skills strategy, which was born on better times, we have pretty much ticked most of the boxes. The one box we have not ticked is what you refer to as the 30 year-old who has come from another industry saying: "I quite fancy a job in construction." We really struggle with that one it has to be said. But pretty much everything else we have ticked boxes and we have moved along really well. But clearly we have got to get back into the schools. Clearly we have got to get that message out and about. Clearly we have got to keep talking to the States and the private sector to make sure the workloads keep coming through and people do not get scared because we are concerned that the States are getting a bit concerned that the industry is overheating. Let us tell you where the industry is, do not form opinions on your own, let us come and tell you where it is and if there is a problem let us find the solution. If someone says we have got a problem with the skill shortages in 18 months' time let us put a training programme together to get skills there and not just say: "Tell you what, we will cancel the project and we will put them back through you." It is the wrong way of doing it.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

It sounds to me as if government and Construction Council industry are at a good stage in terms of discussing future requirements and things that maybe have not gone so well in the past making sure that we do not get the same. Would that be fair comment to make?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes, absolutely. We do think the next level though is to form ... Construction Industry Board, I do not know whether you recall it, it did exist prior to ministerial government and the Minister for Education, Patrick Ryan, was the fulcrum of that. He used to be the chairman of that Construction Industry Board. But that disappointed when ministerial government came in. I do think that more formal connect between government and the industry will be beneficial all round because it will help give a more common message to both parties about what is going on. It will help in the development, specifically what we talked about in lay terms, the skills training, and it will help give the industry a bit more certainty in terms of delivery of projects going forward.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

How are you going to drive that going forward? Is that something you have already put to government and government are ...?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes, we have. We invited the relevant States departments and their Chief Officers to our presentation last week but unfortunately there was a States sitting that got called on the same day after we had issued the date so we are meeting with Treasury and Laura Rowley in the back end of June, and she is already aware of it and we will discuss then about how we pull the heads in.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

So a lot of that might start to knit together towards the end of June, July time?

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Yes. We need Education, we need Social Security, we need E.D.D. (Education Development Department), we probably need the Minister for Planning there. We need Treasury there clearly as well. If we can get all those players in a room - and Health specifically - then you have covered your construction sector in terms of the delivery programme going forward.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Thank you for coming today.

Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council:

Thank you for the opportunity.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

It has been fascinating talking to you. Obviously there are a lot of things moving forward which is very positive, which is good. Great, thank you.

[10:37]