

2024.02.27.

**13.10 Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding acquiring properties of high public value (OQ.34/2024)**

Further to the adoption of P.53/2023, will the Minister advise what progress is being made in notifying the Government when properties or areas of significant value to the people of Jersey become available so that early consideration can be given to, potentially, acquiring them on behalf of the public?

**The Connétable of St. John (The Minister for Infrastructure):**

I thank the Deputy for her question. The identification and acquisition of land or property to support future government services or community benefits is undertaken by Jersey Property Holdings on behalf of the Minister for Infrastructure. It is normally based upon the known future needs and capital planning. It is recognised that not all potential sites are known via existing sources and so to provide better signals and information to the markets Jersey Property Holdings will also be publishing the current government-owned land and property sites map on gov.je. This will allow landowners and agents to consider where their land interests may potentially supplement existing government-owned property and sites.

**13.10.1 Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:**

The amended proposition specifically referred to asking the Government to go away and do a piece of work looking at what mechanisms could be put in place to prevent things like the acquisition of Greve de Lecq happening again. I thank the Minister for his response but it does kind of sound like not an awful lot has happened in relation to that review work specifically. Is he able to provide any further details about what has happened since P.53 was approved by this Assembly?

**The Connétable of St. John:**

As I mentioned, we are looking to put an online map of our existing property. We are talking with agents about potential sites. I am happy to listen to Members' ideas and suggestions, as well as those ideas from members of the public and people in the property profession.

**13.10.2 Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

Does the Minister have the resources to make any such purchases if they become available?

**The Connétable of St. John:**

The short answer is no. Once a site is identified we have to identify funding. As I said when I stood for this position, we need to look at divesting in some properties to allow us to build up some capital to acquire those properties and land that would be of benefit to the Island, compared to some of those that are no longer in use.

[12:00]

**13.10.3 Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

Will the Minister engage with the Minister for Treasury and Resources to consider the option of setting up a pool of funds which would be made available in the future for any such purchases?

**The Connétable of St. John:**

I look forward to discussing property with the Minister for Treasury and Resources. My first priority will be to ensure we get sufficient funds to maintain the properties that we currently own before we go and buy further properties. That does not mean to say that we will not take opportunities to buy properties but I will re-emphasise the importance of maintaining our existing stock before adding to it.

**13.10.4 Deputy J. Renouf:**

Would the Constable agree with me that the issue that was raised with the Greve de Lecq purchase was the problem of finding of what to do with strategically important sites that might have community benefit, significant community benefit to the Island? Is he able to offer the Assembly any reassurance that we have in place some kind of mechanism for helping to identify those sites before they go to the point where they get planning permission and, therefore, increase dramatically in cost?

**The Connétable of St. John:**

I do not believe that there is a formal process in place. I think the officers have been made well aware of our need to act faster in some cases. But, as pointed out earlier, currently there are not funds to secure these parcels of land or properties. It is work in progress. It is something that I am really keen on looking at strategic options for the Island and something I have worked with the officers on.

**13.10.5 Deputy J. Renouf:**

Would the Minister agree to report back to the Assembly in relatively short order on how he progresses P.53, particularly with regard to the mechanisms by which we might identify strategic properties and make purchases?

**The Connétable of St. John:**

Currently I am coming up to speed with the property element of my portfolio. There are a number of things in there, and P.53 is something that this Assembly has agreed to and, therefore, I feel duty bound to come back at some stage. I cannot put a timeline on that currently.

**13.10.6 The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

The question refers to properties or areas of significant value to the people of Jersey. I hope this is not straying too far from that question but my question is: is there a policy at the moment whereby the States look to provide domestic properties to provide homes?

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

You are probably straying too far from the question.

**The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

You think so.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

Sorry about that. Are there any other questions? Final supplementary, Deputy Stephenson.

**13.10.7 Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:**

Does the Minister agree with me - and, hopefully, this just expands on what my colleague, Deputy Ahier, has asked - that returning to this Assembly with any potential options for a mechanism should be backed up at the same time with the creation of a mechanism or a fund,

even ahead of expenditure within the Government Plan, for, potentially, making such strategic purchases?

**The Connétable of St. John:**

I totally agree. There is no point in coming back with a plan if there is no funding to enforce that plan.