

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER**

**ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 31st JANUARY 2006**

**Question**

Would the Minister inform members –

- (a) what consideration, if any, has been given to the possibility of opening ferry services to the Island to a fresh tendering process? and,
- (b) what progress, if any, has there been in talks with his Guernsey counterpart regarding the possible adoption of a joint approach to ferry services on the southern route?

**Answer**

- (a) Members are aware that towards the end of last year the former Economic Development Committee had approved a draft air, sea and transport policy to be progressed by the new Minister. As far as sea transport services were concerned, the draft stated that ferry operators wanting to operate services to and from the Island would only be granted a ramp permit if they had a service level agreement which would be issued on a non exclusive basis.

The context that faced the former Economic Development Committee in arriving at that view was that not only did competition exist on the route but it had done so for a considerable period of time. The situation that emerged in December 2005 when Emeraude Jersey Ferries withdrew its service from the Jersey/St Malo route, however, meant that it was right and proper that the options available to the Island should be reviewed in light of the changing market situation.

I confirm that a review of the full range of options available to the Island commenced late last year including a fresh look at whether it would be better to test the market in some way. The review of is ongoing and comments and/or advice have been sought on particular aspects of possible future options from the Law Officers Dept, Oxera, the JCRA and Harbours.

The Minister for Economic Development is aware of the importance of the Island's sea transport services on both the southern and northern routes for many aspects of Island life and the Council of Ministers has been asked to consider this matter at its meeting on the 9th February 2006. The States were advised on the 13th December 2005, that the intention was to make a decision on future policy on sea transport services by the end of February 2006. That is still the intention.

- (b) I am pleased to inform the States that discussions have been held this week between Ministers and officers from Economic Development and Ministers and officials from the States of Guernsey Commerce and Employment and Public Services Departments.

The purpose of the meeting was to consider how the Islands interests could best be served in securing ferry services that the Islands need. The meeting was a continuation of discussions held in 2005 at staff level arising from consultations on policy proposals at that time being developed by the former Economic Development Committee.

The possibility of joining the Guernsey and Jersey markets is likely to be attractive to ferry operators as it is likely to strengthen the commercial viability of routes serving the Channel Islands. It is, therefore, considered that there would be benefit from closer cooperation between the Islands to secure sufficient and reliable services that meet the needs of the travelling public.

The Islands have agreed that further discussions should now take place to identify the services that both Islands require and whether these could be incorporated into an integrated service level agreement which could be used to secure ferry services on routes serving the Channel Islands. Clearly this process would include services related to the southern sector.

It is the wish of both Islands that they should be served by reliable long term services and we will be working together to secure that outcome.