

STATEMENT ON A MATTER OF OFFICIAL RESPONSIBILITY

8. The Chief Minister will make a statement regarding Jersey and the Royal Navy through an affiliation with Her Majesty's Ship Iron Duke

8.1 Senator I.J. Gorst (The Chief Minister):

As I am sure Members are aware, a special relationship has developed in recent years between Jersey and the Royal Navy through an affiliation with Her Majesty's Ship Iron Duke. To help this affiliation to thrive and provide maximum benefit for the Royal Navy, H.M.S. Iron Duke and the Island, an Iron Duke auxiliary crew has been formed made up of Islanders. This crew works closely with the ship to raise awareness of the ship's company's activities here in Jersey, supporting them as far as we can both in and outside their operational roles.

This has been achieved in many ways, enhancing the welfare of the ship's company while also supporting the Island's industries locally and internationally. Throughout 2013 and in particular through events at the Jersey Boat Show, we are increasing our efforts to benefit the international effectiveness of H.M.S. Iron Duke, her officers and her crew. Members may recall the excellent presentation that senior representatives from the Royal Navy gave us a few weeks ago. We heard in some detail about the importance of the Royal Navy's work across the globe, particularly in patrolling the ocean seas as part of the fight against terrorism and international crime. This weekend, senior Royal Navy personnel will be in Jersey at the Boat Show once again playing an important role in the event. H.M.S. Iron Duke has been undergoing a complete refit and hopes to visit Jersey in the near future. To mark her re-commissioning and after consulting yourself, Sir, the Lieutenant Governor, I am pleased to announce today that we plan to present a one-off donation of £30,000 to the Commanding Officer of H.M.S. Iron Duke on Sunday. This donation on behalf of the Island will be funded from a Treasury underspend and will be used to enhance the welfare of the ship's company and improve their facilities on board ship, for the benefit of the personnel who serve Great Britain. I hope Members will take the opportunity of wishing the company of H.M.S. Iron Duke every possible success in their sea trials following the refit and in the important work they do patrolling some of the most dangerous areas across the globe. We look forward to developing a new strong relationship with this unique vessel and its company in the months and years to come and look forward to welcoming Royal Navy personnel to Jersey this weekend.

The Bailiff:

Does any Member wish to ask any questions on that? Yes, the Connétable of St. Lawrence.

8.1.1 The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Paragraph 3 refers to the ship supporting the Island's industries locally and internationally and goes on to mention the Boat Show, but I am not aware of any other way in which it has done this and I would like the Chief Minister to expand on this please.

Senator I.J. Gorst:

It is my understanding that when members of either this particular ship or other ships in the Royal Navy, they take part in a number of community events while they are present here. Obviously the Boat Show is the major event and Government and members of the industry can take advantage of their - I am not sure that stationing is the right word - when they are alongside in Jersey and I think that they bring great benefit when they are present.

8.1.2 The Connétable of St. John:

I am not opposed to this grant, but I will ask the Minister: for a considerable number of years now we have been trying to get funding for the Sea Cadets and have their new headquarters. This is the way forward for our young people to join the Royal Navy, *et cetera*. It is all well and

good giving a one-off grant as we are on this occasion, but I would far prefer the funding to go to our Sea Cadets with their new headquarters and put the money where it should be. That way we would see young people from this Island going on to join the Royal Navy and, therefore, we would have succession planning in place. This is just a one-off and I just have to ask: is it the right way, Minister, to be spending our money?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I believe that it absolutely is the right way as I hopefully explained in my statement. I think there are very good reasons for providing this donation at this point and I believe that we, as a community, can go on and benefit greatly from what I hope will be an enhanced relationship with H.M.S. Iron Duke. With regard to the Sea Cadets, the Connétable is absolutely right and as he knows, I have been a supporter for a number of years of the Sea Cadets, having served on their management committee and as he also knows from the M.T.F.P. (Medium-Term Financial Plan) debate, the good officers of Property Services are even now working to deliver a new headquarters for the Sea Cadets. So it should not be one or the other; it should be both.

8.1.3 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

When the Minister was replying to the Connétable of St. Lawrence, he did make comments about supporting the local industries but he did not answer the question supporting the Island's industries internationally. I wonder if he would care to finish answering that question.

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Yes, of course. The association that, as I have said, I hope will grow will mean that Jersey is associated with H.M.S. Iron Duke wherever she goes around the world and that will, ultimately, while obviously the number one concern of the ship will be their operational duties and the safeguarding and the patrolling that they do, there will be that association that could be drawn upon more widely in future but will be there nonetheless.

8.1.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

While I have no objection to the use of this £30,000, I would like to reinforce the question asked by the Constable of St. John about why this spend was not locally? We have got a Minister for Treasury and Resources appealing for projects that he can use for fiscal stimulus on the Island, and yet I understand this is from underspends and those underspends are there sitting there waiting to be spent. It would surely be preferable, while one is doing this sort of magnanimous gesture, that we do something locally as well. Is that not the case?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

As I have indicated, we are working towards a new headquarters for the Jersey Sea Cadets, and that will be local. Of course, encouraging members of the Armed Forces to visit Jersey and members of the Navy to visit Jersey, which I believe that this association will do, will lead to further spending inevitably within our community as well.

8.1.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

In a similar vein to previous questions, it is nice that the Chief Minister has come along and told us that this £30,000 of underspend will be given to such a noble cause. Does he not think it would be preferable if the Assembly were to have endorsed it by way of a vote and a very simple proposition, so that we can all endorse it and show that we decide as an Assembly how this underspend money is spent? Does he think that that is a dangerous precedent now that these underspends can appear, and that other Members who might have quite equally or even more worthy projects would not be able to secure even these very modest funds for their own projects?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I would say absolutely the reverse. We gave a commitment in this Government to where we could make statements in the Assembly around activity that we were planning. We could simply have made a statement outside of this Assembly notifying this but I felt it was right and respectful, and that the Assembly I hope, which seemed to be showing their support, could show their support as well for this donation and therefore I think this is the right approach to take.

8.1.6 Deputy M. Tadier:

A supplementary; the point I am making is that I think we would have been quite happy if the Minister had told us that the money was going to any other number of charities, or indeed if it was going to the Instrumental Music Service to help provide a larger bursary for those who could not afford to learn the cornet, which they may be able to play with the Jersey Sea Cadets, *et cetera*. So will the Minister perhaps give consideration about how future underspends will be approved and not simply come to the Assembly not even for rubberstamping but to seek the Assembly's approval for projects so that there can be consensus?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Obviously the use of underspends is determined by I think the Finance Law. It seems as though I cannot win, can I? I come to this Assembly. They are the first Members to know of this donation and I think that is the right and proper approach to take.

8.1.7 Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

I wonder if the Chief Minister would care to remind Members of the bell that exists just outside the door of this Assembly from H.M.S. Jersey, and would he agree that H.M.S. Jersey's replacement was in part made and was in fact H.M.S. Iron Duke and that is why there is the important link with H.M.S. Iron Duke and Jersey? Is he aware that we understand that there are numerous artefacts and references to Jersey in H.M.S. Iron Duke and this will further strengthen that longstanding relationship because of H.M.S. Jersey with Iron Duke, and will he agree that this donation will make a meaningful difference to many people who risk their lives in serving, in some of the issues that he has explained in terms of the most dangerous waters in the world?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Yes, yes and yes.