

Comments on the Tourism Development Fund

For the attention of Deputy S. Power, Chairman of the Corporate Services Sub-Panel

Members will be aware that this issue has been referred for a Scrutiny Review following comments I and others made in the States Assembly on the 1st and 2nd May 2012.

I do not believe there is anything further that I can add to the comments I made at the time and those will be available in full through the Hansard transcript. I had not discussed the proposal with any colleagues prior to the debate and I made my comments after become increasingly concerned whilst preparing for the debate on Project 26/2012 prior to the States sitting.

As a result of my comments it appeared that a number of other members had similar concerns on the proposition to expand the existing TDF funding in order to include financial assistance to “private organisations”.

I believe there were initial concerns from some that my comments were criticisms directed towards Durrell. This was never intended. The proposition did not actually involve them as they were already in receipt of funding from the TDF being classified as a “voluntary organisation” but I was using the point to express my additional concerns as to how the fund was already being dispersed within the existing terms.

It seemed that Durrell had received considerable sums of public money from the TDF by way of “grants” for specific projects that I believed did little, if anything, to encourage visitors to the Island. Those concerns were heightened when I noted that some of the TDF funding appeared to have been used to provide toilets and even for the re-branding of the Durrell organisation. I was also concerned to learn that Durrell appeared to have also received considerable and quite separate Fiscal Stimulus funding. I was unaware that Durrell fell into the category of a “voluntary organisation” wrongly believing it was a private enterprise. I accept that hundreds of thousands of people have visited Jersey Zoo (later Durrell) over the years and I have visited the Zoo regularly since I was a child but I doubted that the concept of the TDF was to provide funding for toilets.

Other sums of money appeared to have been given to organisations for ventures that, in my opinion, appeared to have little impact for encouraging increased tourism albeit the services provided may have made the quality of life better for residents in specific areas, ie; electric and water to the Five Mile Road area!

The Terms of Reference of the Scrutiny Sub-Panel appear comprehensive with the aim of identifying the potential benefits, identifying what funds are going to be used and to consider the implications of the extension to private organisations. The existing distribution of funding has already been approved but I welcome the terms of reference indicated by points 6, 7 and 8 showing that the Sub-Panel will also be reviewing the disbursements of TDF funds, the TDF budget and the composition of the TDF Panel.

Since the debate many people have spoken with me to express their concerns on the TDF and appreciate that the whole issue is to be subject of review by the Scrutiny Sub-Panel.

Areas of concern:-

- How public / voluntary organisations apply. Application forms ?
- How there was a “proven track record” of success.
- How “proven track record” is measured.
- How “successful” ventures were proved to be successful.
- How decisions were reached as to who received funding!
- Whether the funding was a “repayable grant” or a “donation”!
- How organisations reported back following a grant and to whom did they report.
- Who had been refused grants?
- Why had some been refused grants?
- Whether the application process would be the same for a private enterprise!
- Who was the success for, the organisation or for the Island (ie; tourism).
- Should a limit be set as to the maximum amount payable to an organisation?
- How the TDF Panel was selected / elected.
- How they run their business / meetings.
- Whether the tax-payer should be contributing towards private organisations or indeed public and the voluntary organisations albeit the latter two have States approval.
- I recall problems that occurred in the past with similar funding contribution schemes to farmers! Is the TDF any different and if it is, how?

TDF