

Dear Members of the Scrutiny Panel,

I write with reference to the funding costs of the new hospital.

By way of background, my property lies adjacent to one of three properties which have been acquired by the States and will, subject to planning consent, be demolished to make way for the widened Westmount Road affectionately referred to as the "Super Highway". I would mention that at the nearest point my property is less than 2.5 metres from the current boundary wall of one of the adjacent properties acquired. You will appreciate, I have concerns regarding the road widening and the impact it will have on privacy and peaceful enjoyment of our property.

We have endured twelve months of hell not knowing what impact this project will ultimately have on our property. I say this because when Overdale was chosen as the preferred site it was indicated that three properties within the immediate vicinity of my property were to be acquired by the Government and authority was given by the States Assembly to proceed with compulsory purchases if negotiated acquisitions could not be achieved. Subsequent to such approval it has transpired that as many as 14 homes/properties will be acquired and destroyed to accommodate the building of the Super Highway and hospital. A completely different picture to that originally sold to the States Assembly.

If that isn't enough we now learn that Pets Paradise may go out of business due to the loss of parking spaces in front of their store under the road plans for St. Aubin's/Pierson Road.

At the outset Senator Farnham made reference to all the plans being in the public domain but in reality one had to review a 220 page document to understand the impact on our houses and even then it was not clear at that stage to what degree the proposed works would impact on the current boundaries and the aesthetic of the layout thereafter. He even went so far as to suggest that all impacted residents had been contacted. This was simply not the case with matters coming to light through neighbours affected by the plans and reports published in the media.

As we have seen with the recent situation with Pets Paradise, plans are released, there is "fall out" subsequently then everybody is assured that these are only plans and the government is open to consultation. My view is why not consult beforehand with plans drawn up thereafter. Surely this will not only provide comfort to the public but will lead to their buy in. In all likelihood plans will need to be amended further increasing costs to the taxpayer.

It will be argued by Senator Farnham that the community is being kept abreast of developments through the Overdale Neighbourhood Forum which meetings I attend. It has however been my experience that valid community observations/suggestions are noted but nothing else. Senator Farnham should put in more appearances at this forum but instead we

have been saddled with [REDACTED] recently, who frankly has been downright rude and condescending with certain [REDACTED] comments on occasion.

Decisions have and continue to be taken and bulldozed through the States without due regard for those most directly impacted by the proposals.

I have raised a number of concerns with States Members in the past and until recently I remained of the view that the majority of States members seemed to think the public want the hospital “anywhere for any price”.

One aspect that I have found deeply disturbing is the way the Government has, in my mind, not been prepared to openly discuss legitimate questions raised by Scrutiny and some members of the Assembly. We are constantly told that delays will result in additional costs to the Island and that we must proceed without delay.

This approach is evident from the comments of Senator Gorst – JEP 28 November 2020. Whilst he acknowledges the £800 million costs of the project he appears to place greater emphasis on the costs of delays to the project stating this will be “tens of thousands per day”. I interpret this as “don’t worry about the cost let’s just get on with it”

I question whether the Scrutiny Panel has had sight of the contract currently entered into and more importantly have received satisfactory answers as to why the Island appears to have been saddled with expensive penalty type clauses within the contract for delays .

It is imperative that the Scrutiny Panel and States Assembly provide a robust challenge going forward, with the latter in particular needing to ensure collectively, that a thorough examination of the costs/plans/logistics is carried out when presented and voted on. Hopefully we will not see a repeat of the performance at the States Assembly Meeting held on 17 November 2020 which frankly was embarrassing. I find it hard to accept some of the lame comments of members provided as an excuse following that debate -or lack thereof at that time.

The Island is facing serious challenges the like of which have not been experienced in modern times. The ongoing impact of Covid 19 cannot be underestimated and this coupled with Brexit issues and perhaps tax challenges to our offshore finance industry by EU member states may affect not only the Island’s finances but also the health and financial wellbeing of its residents.

We then come to the cost of the hospital project as well, the funding requirements of government are eye watering and unprecedented by Jersey’s standards with overall public debt to rise from 5% of GDP to 39%. The Government has opted to fund the hospital project

(the 'budget' for the new hospital (p.80/2021) with a starting cost of £804 million) by way of two £400m bonds. Tax rises appear to have been ruled out – but for how long and is this sustainable?

I would also argue that the budgeted cost of the hospital is understated and that the interest costs associated with the aforementioned bonds must also be taken into account in the final reckoning of how much this project will actually cost the taxpayers of Jersey. Furthermore, how will the interest on the bonds be funded?

Lest not forget the dismantling of the Nightingale Hospital and the Planning Application for the Les Quennevais change of use to a temporary medical facility (at a starting cost of £15 million) which has also been lodged recently – yet more costs to the Jersey taxpayer.

I was concerned by [REDACTED] comments in the media concerning the costs to Jersey taxpayers of £1.4bn by the time the bonds are paid off in forty years, stating that the new hospital project will only cost the taxpayer an extra £3.51 a week based on a population of 110,000 people – only the cost of a “meal deal”, which works out to £182.52 per year. What [REDACTED] failed to understand was that the number of people in employment is considerably less – approximately 60,000, I understand. [REDACTED] has not been elected and should stick to those matters which [REDACTED] is best qualified to address. Going forward I would suggest [REDACTED] leave issues of public debt to the politicians.

I don't believe that it is an exaggeration to say that the financial wellbeing of this Island is at stake here. Get it wrong and the consequences for Islanders now and in the future could be devastating.

Could it be the case that the penny has finally dropped and a number of members are now running scared realising the magnitude of the costs in building the Super Highway and hospital and the groundswell of opposition building up within the community. The upcoming elections might also be helping to focus minds of States Members.

As I have acknowledged and communicated previously, there is no question that the Island needs a new hospital and facilities and in itself this is not my main concern. As a taxpayer I do however have concerns as to the significant costs of the current proposals and the perception that Overdale is the only option despite the well documented obstacles and associated costs.

In conclusion, it is not too late and we must not be afraid to reject all the proposals currently tabled if they are not considered to be in the best interests of the Island. I am of that view.

**Paul Embery**