

3.20 Deputy T.M. Pitman of the Minister for Housing regarding maintenance issues at La Collette Flats:

Given the longstanding problems with maintenance issues at La Collette Flats, will the Minister clarify what the current plans are for either refurbishment or redevelopment and, if the latter, will he advise what timescales are envisaged?

Deputy A.K.F. Green of St. Helier (Assistant Minister for Housing - rapporteur):

La Collette tower block is a priority due to its condition. Plans for its refurbishment are well advanced. Phase 1 of that project will be to carry out the wholesale replacement of lifts. The 2 existing lifts stop on alternate floors only and the part of the lift replacement will be to ensure that every floor is served by both lifts. This will significantly improve the situation for residents, but also enable the work to be carried out by contractors in the refurbishment. This will minimise the impact on residents at the time. The lift replacement contract is already out to tender and tenders are due to be returned on 3rd June and work will get underway this year. The remainder of the refurbishment of the tower can only be tendered once the lift work is underway and it is clear when that lift work will be completed. The earliest we will commence work on site for the refurbishment, over-cladding, new windows, *et cetera*, will be in 2012. It is our aim to achieve this and I am currently in discussions with the Minister for Treasury and Resources and his team in respect of alternative funding as to how we could speed things up. Not only do we need to ensure that our tenants live in good quality accommodation, but also I want to bring additional work to the construction industry in these difficult times. In respect of the low rise element of La Collette refurbishment, the refurbishment of the existing homes is not the preferred option. It is proposed that this part of the site be redeveloped and current proposals would be for a Phase 3 development on the site, which would allow as many of the existing residents as possible to remain on site, but in new homes. This will be a very significant redevelopment and would likely add a number of additional homes. It will be subject to finance and the project is presently planned for 2015.

3.20.1 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I thank the Minister for that; that is a very informative answer. Given the problems experienced by many residents in the area, what reassurance can he give in the meantime rather than wait until 2015 for ongoing problems with damp and condensation, which is a major blight on the area?

Deputy A.K.F. Green:

I have visited a number of the flats since I have been Minister for Housing, but I visited one in the low rise flats yesterday. There is definitely a problem with condensation, which is caused basically by poor construction; in terms of there is no insulation. Attempts have been made to improve the buildings in the past by putting double-glazing in and that has made the condensation problem more problematic. The only light I can offer tenants is to be absolutely honest; this is going to take time to put right. To improve the condensation situation we need to increase the insulation. That cannot be done in isolation; it needs to be done as a whole project. I am happy to work with residents to advise them on how we can reduce condensation, but it is a problem in old constructed buildings.

3.20.2 Deputy P.J. Rondel of St. John:

I have got some real concerns in the reply the Minister has given to Deputy Pitman, given that in my time in this Chamber, I am aware - and the Minister has in fact

alluded to it - of replacement windows, i.e. by double-glazing or the likes, within that tower block. That being the case, the Minister also mentioned condensation. Given condensation is usually caused through lack of ventilation and people drying clothes within the house and the likes, through lack of the correct drying equipment within their washing machine, is the Minister telling this House that we are now going to be putting new windows for the second if not third time in the last 16, 17 years in a building that ... is that what he is telling us, please?

Deputy A.K.F. Green:

What I am telling the Assembly is that we need to put windows that have problem thermal insulation. We need to properly thermally-insulate the building, get the u-values of the wall to the correct standards, so that we can enable our tenants to live in comfortable warm homes that are free of condensation. That is what I am telling the Assembly.

3.20.3 The Deputy of St. John:

Supplementary on that, Sir? As I have already said, condensation is created through lack of ventilation, because people use washing machines and dryers which have not got the right equipment in them. Will his officers, before going to all the expense of replacing windows and the like and doing all the work on the outside of the building, check and see what type of washing machines and clothes dryers these particular units have got?

Deputy A.K.F. Green:

I have already done that and in fact I have plans to put some temporary drying arrangements for clothes for the tenants, but the fact is that unless we insulate these buildings, even if we do manage to get them free of condensation, they are going to be cold; they are expensive for tenants to heat. States tenants deserve warm, dry, comfortable accommodation. It is my job as Minister for Housing to see that they get it.

3.20.4 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

While I would like to congratulate all of the good work the Minister and his Assistant Minister and the department do, would he not accept that 2014 or 2015 is so far into the future that it represents the basis why developing and redeveloping States-owned sites are highly unlikely to meet the needs of the 900 people currently waiting on the States housing list and the 425 children of those 900 people, minimum, that are having to wait 14 months on average to get housed. Would he not agree that it is time that £26 million stopped going to the Treasury and retained itself within Housing, so that Housing can get on and house the people of this Island?

Deputy A.K.F. Green:

No, I would not agree with that. I do agree that we need to stop talking about the sites that we already own and start developing them. I do agree with that, because it is a fact that we have 400 and something families on the waiting list and that will equate to about 900 individuals, many of them children. We need to get on with the work. We need to get it done. My officers are working on that and we have already made huge inroads in the short time that I have been Minister.

3.20.5 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I am sure the Minister will do this, but Deputy Power, his predecessor, had an excellent record of attending properties with me and seeing situations for himself. Does the Minister agree that ensuring the standard of ongoing maintenance to 2015 is very, very important? After all, I had one experience where the people's ceiling collapsed and the contractors put the new ceiling so low that they could not open the windows. Will he be ensuring that that sort of thing cannot happen again?

Deputy A.K.F. Green:

I intend to ensure that all our tenants have accommodation that they can be comfortable in, pleased to live in and indeed proud to live in. I will be making sure that maintenance is going on. I walked Clos Gosset yesterday and I was embarrassed.

The Bailiff:

I think you have given the answer, Deputy. I might just get in one more question if we can, which is Deputy Jeune who will ask a question of the Minister for Health and Social Services.