

2.10 The Connétable of St. John of the Minister for Economic Development regarding the breakdown of the Airport Instrument Landing System:

Given that part of the airport I.L.S. (Instrument Landing System) has been out of action since 28th September and the St. Martin V.O.R. (VHF omnidirectional radio range) beacon off-service since 5th September 2012, on how many occasions have both systems been out of action together and for how long, what back up is available and how many technicians support this system compared to 5 years ago?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean (The Minister for Economic Development):

For the avoidance of doubt I would like to start by reassuring Members that at all times safety is of paramount importance at Jersey Airport. It is, therefore, very rare for both airport Instrument Landing System and the St. Martin V.O.R. to be out of action at the same time. Based on information provided to me by the Airport only this morning it has only happened twice in the last 5 years, the latest being between 25th September and 27th October of this year. The V.O.R. or omnidirectional radio range finder to which the Connétable refers is in fact largely irrelevant to this issue because it is principally an en route navigational aid and, in any event, relates to the aircraft approaching the runway from the other direction on to runway 27. There is a further en route navigational aid - which is a non-directional beacon - that was fully functional on runway 09 where the I.L.S. was out of service. Both these devices can be used for aircraft approach but not to the same extent of course as the Instrument Landing System. With regard to technicians, following a review of the Air Traffic Engineer Unit in 2007 there has been significant restructure. This has resulted in specific specialism's being created within the unit for the maintenance of systems. Meanwhile the commissioning of equipment and specific projects is now contracted out to suppliers and manufacturers who have a high concentration of expertise. This has led to an overall reduction of staff at Air Traffic Engineering from 23 in 2007 to 10 today. However, 5 of these are specialists in navigational aids, which exceed most comparable airports.

2.10.1 The Connétable of St. John:

I am concerned at what I have just been told; very concerned. Given that infrastructure - as the Minister will know - is an area that I have got great concern about and lack of funding. Is sufficient funding in place to maintain the infrastructure at the airport and, if not, what is the Minister going to do about it? Also, with spares - and obviously they are not kept on Island - if sufficient funding is required to carry certain spares, will that be put in place so we do not have a scenario like we have had for the last month again?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

To reassure the Connétable and Members hopefully, first of all the Instrument Landing System is in the capital programme for replacement in 2015 at a cost approximately of £1.5 million. Yes, it has been contained within forward projections as one would expect. As far as maintenance is concerned, there is ongoing maintenance, yes, within budget. There is no shortage of funding with regard to maintenance. I think the key issue here is that we need to recognise that this was a most extraordinary circumstance during bird control - which is clearly vitally important at all airports - damage was caused which was noted on the monthly checks that occur on this particular piece of equipment, which is again understandable from a safety perspective, but nevertheless I have every confidence that there is appropriate funding in place to ensure that this equipment is properly maintained and indeed replaced when the time comes.

2.10.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

I am pleased the Minister mentioned the fact that the equipment was damaged during bird scaring. Can he explain to us how they managed to damage the equipment and what equipment they damaged and why there were not spare parts for that particular equipment?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Yes, I can. First of all I should state that there is an investigation underway and of course what I will say will be subject to the outcome of that investigation. There are a number of methods used first of all for bird control and the airport, which as Members would expect, meet all necessary international standards in that regard. There are in fact lethal weapons but those are used only as a last resort with persistent birds to avoid bird strikes. There are zone guns, which are loud noises, there are lasers and there is a whole management programme in place to minimise bird issues at the airport. As far as the damage to the I.L.S. system, that was caused by, we understand, a pellet which punctured part of the casing and caused moisture to get into some of the cabling. There is back up resilience to all safety critical components of the Instrument Landing System, as one would expect, but this is a most unusual circumstance and this cabling is specialist cabling that the manufacturer did not have in stock which led to the extended delay in 09 being out of commission. I agree with the Deputy that this was unacceptable, the Connétable as well. It lasted too long and indeed as part of the investigation procedures will be reviewed as to whether indeed anything should be addressed for future.

2.10.3 Deputy S. Power:

It is in relation to the actual shooting out of part of the I.L.S. system by accident. Can the Minister confirm to the Assembly whether there was any other damage to any other equipment on the date in question as my understanding is that the I.L.S. equipment is close to other equipment?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

No, I am not aware of any further damage. Quite simply the damage was to some casing which meant that the cabling had moisture content allowed into it and that indeed caused the problem. I should also perhaps point out to Members that the I.L.S. system was still functioning perfectly satisfactorily. It was only upon the advice of the manufacturers that it was assessed that there was a risk and this was done on the monthly checks. The equipment is checked monthly, as I pointed out, that it was wise to take it down and replace the area that was causing some concern. It was functioning at the time.

2.10.4 Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour:

I have also heard accounts of this particular incident from the airport. Is it not the case that this particular system had not had one pellet shot, it had several pellet shots in it, that it was not the case that they were doing bird strikes? It was at night dealing with the vermin problems of rabbits. Is it not the case that no record was kept about who has done this work? Is the Minister able to confirm that this is the situation?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

It seems to me the Deputy is very well informed and I am sure the content of what he has just mentioned to the Assembly will come out as a result of the investigation. Yes, I believe indeed it was rabbits but of course rabbits are linked directly to bird control and, of course, if there are rabbits out on the airfield you are going to get more birds so the rabbits have to be dealt with as well. The Deputy is quite correct in that regard and, as I have said, there is a full investigation afoot and we will indeed publish the results so Members will be therefore fully informed of exactly what happened on this particular occasion.

2.10.5 The Connétable of St. John:

Would the Minister agree that by a department not acknowledging that there is a problem to the public that it created an awful lot of disruption whereby travelling public, in some cases flights returned back to the U.K. or flying overhead for half an hour longer than they should have been, flights were missed, *et cetera*, and only this last week there was a... yes you admitted there was a problem, but why did you not come clean from day one so the public would have known? Can

the Minister please answer why he held everyone in suspense for so long over this particular scenario?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

First of all, I do not think I personally held anybody in suspense but as far as the communication is concerned I think in hindsight it could have been perhaps more clearly explained so that the public were fully informed as to exactly what had happened. To be fair the weather conditions at the time were very poor and a number of flights that were cancelled were cancelled due to the weather conditions. We are looking as part of the investigation as to how many flights were disrupted as a result of the Instrument Landing System being out of service, and indeed that information will also be published so that Members are fully informed in due course. I would add, as I have said before, that the situation is thoroughly unsatisfactory and that is why an investigation is underway.

2.10.6 The Connétable of St. John:

If it was operating, as the Minister has said, and we had some bad weather with thick fog, *et cetera*, why was it not turned on? Can the Minister please answer that?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Yes, I will answer that and I have stated at the beginning it was turned off for safety reasons on the advice of the manufacturer. It was working at the time that the damage was discovered but it was not deemed to be safe to leave it on. Frankly I would not want to be flying if equipment was deemed unsafe by the manufacturer. I think that was a responsible position to take by the airport.