

3.6 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains of the Minister for Economic Development regarding review of off-Island transport links:

Would the Minister inform Members whether he is reviewing off-Island transport links with regard to their ease of use, availability and reliability and, if so, will he be publishing a paper on his findings?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf (Minister for Economic Development):

Off-Island transport is something that I regard as constantly under review. Last week this Assembly debated at some length Deputy Fox's proposition concerning our sea links. This was an important debate which we certainly found useful. We are shortly to set up with the Consumer Council a user group. In parallel the Economics Unit are commissioning work on freight markets. As far as air links are concerned we continue to administer the air permits law on the basis of open skies. The new airport director is in post and I am looking forward to my assistant minister doing all they can to ensure that our air links are maintained and enhanced. I will keep the House informed of any developments in this area.

3.6.1 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

We currently have a situation, Sir, where the operator on the northern route is allegedly not complying with the service level agreement. I refer to the lack of printed timetables. Does the Minister not agree this is not only unhelpful but likely to have an adverse effect on both local travel and especially tourism? What is he going to do about it?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

The Deputy will be aware that the service level agreement does require timetables and that is something that we have taken up. I have to say I was not aware that timetables were not available on the northern route. I thought that the issue of timetables was lack of availability on the southern route because of the uncertainty in relation to the alternative carrier. As far as the general issue of the service level agreement is concerned, we keep that matter under review. Moreover, a new service level agreement is currently being negotiated with Condor for the period until 1st January 2009. If he has any points to make on that we would be willing to take them up with Condor.

3.6.2 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

If I could turn to the southern route now, does the Minister agree with OXERA's analysis which was printed a couple of years ago now that more than one operator on the route would lead to disaster, which surely is borne out by recent events. With the current lack of apparent communication with our sister Island, Sir, would the Minister seek a single operator for the southern route with appropriate service level agreement in order to get some confidence back for the travelling public?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

I do not believe, Sir, that the OXERA report said that there should be a one single licence monopoly. I think they identified an innovative suggestion in relation to a one-monopoly operator during the non-peak period. And so I would encourage the Deputy to re-read that report and carefully review their conclusions. In relation, this Assembly had a good debate last week on southern route services. We appended to our comments our revised policy which had been discussed by the Council of

Ministers and I thought that that was a useful debate which we agreed with many of the points that Deputy Fox made. As far as communication with our sister Island is concerned, we are in communication and good communication. We have already had a meeting between their air and sea transport policy group in Jersey and I look forward to continuing to work with Guernsey, to arrive at a situation where a common situation for all Island network routes is put in place from the beginning of 2009. So, communication may be difficult in some areas, but it is certainly not in this area.

3.6.3 Deputy S.C. Ferguson of St. Brelade:

To revert to the timetable question, Sir, is the Minister aware that it is quite possible to get hold of a timetable for the northern route if you live in the U.K. but impossible if you live in Jersey?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

It may well be that it is impossible to get a written timetable available to pick up and I am aware that there are issues with the timetable availability. I did not know that one was available in the U.K. I will take those questions on board and I will communicate those concerns to Condor directly. I have to say that at all times when we have raised issues with Condor about issues they have exceeded my expectations in certainly turning their attention to it immediately and I am sure that they will, if there a problem, deal with that issue instantaneously.

3.6.4 Deputy A.D. Lewis of St. John:

A few years ago when the Minister was at a conference in Guernsey, he suggested the idea or the concept of forming a Channel Islands commission. In the light of some of the things that the Chief Minister was quoted as saying in the press this week and in light of his comments today about the relationship with Guernsey, does he think that it is perhaps high time that we seriously considered some kind of Channel Islands commission to resolve a number of issues between the Islands rather than just specific *ad hoc* ones such as the one he has just described?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

I would not want to take away anything from any comments that the Chief Minister may have in relation to joint Channel Islands co-operation, but certainly following that I.O.D. (Institute of Directors) debate I did circulate a draft report and proposition - in fact I think it was just the proposition, not the report - on issues of Channel Islands co-operation, and I do still hold the view that we should set up some sort of super body across the islands to deal with pan-Channel Islands issues. I agree with that; that has been my position for a long time. The issue that remains is one of fishing and we need to resolve the fishing issue. There are issues there which must be resolved and I am working with the Council of Ministers just to consider the fishing issue in the next few days and I am hopeful to start negotiations to deal with this issue once and for all. Moving on from there, yes, a Channel Islands licensing authority for sea links, given responsibility by both the States of Jersey and Guernsey for that decision, is the way forward; as is telecoms regulation a pan-Channel Islands issue; as is a competition regulatory authority a pan-Channel Islands issue.

3.6.5 The Deputy of St. John:

Would the Minister give some assurance that he will suggest that this becomes an agenda item in a future Council of Ministers meeting?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

I am sure that the Chief Minister will want to consider that issue. Certainly there are some lessons to be learnt about relations with Guernsey that we have learnt over the last few months. I do not think it is fair to say - and I do not think the Chief Minister did actually say: I think it was a headline writer in the JEP that said relations had deteriorated. He will speak for himself, no doubt, in questions without notice. But certainly from a number of Ministers' point of view I know the Minister for Housing was in Guernsey yesterday, I am in regular communication with them, I have to be on issues such as fulfilment et cetera, but I agree that a formal body may well be of some use.

3.6.6 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

I am glad the Minister has read the OXERA report, although I am afraid we are probably going to have to differ over its outcome and that our relationship with Guernsey is still in good working order. Hopefully he can assure us that the resolution of the ferry links will be forthcoming soon because the travelling public are both concerned and confused and I do not believe it is doing our tourism industry any good.

The Deputy Bailiff:

What is your question, Deputy?

Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

I wanted assurance that the Minister was going to resolve the ferry links soon.

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

I am surprised that the Deputy is saying these things. I thought we had a good debate last week. I think this Assembly considered, rightfully, the policy of my department in relation to sea links. It clearly set out the action points in relation to service level agreements this year, service level agreements northern and southern routes for the period 2008 and the position on post-2009. I think we clearly set out that. If the Deputy has any further ideas of what we should be doing, I am delighted to hear them. In relation to Emeraude and the continuing uncertainty, I agree with him and even today I do not understand and I am not certain that Emeraude are going to be back on the route and that is a shame. Perhaps he wants to ask me questions in the without notice session on it.

3.6.7 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

I am glad that the Minister finally got around to suggesting that he admits there are problems. I do not believe we resolved the issue at the last debate, Sir. Moving onto the Airport, Sir, could the Minister seek to make the Airport more user-friendly? It seems to be being altered almost on a daily basis to make it impossible to use.

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

Sir, I do not know where Deputy Baudains comes from sometimes. **[Laughter]** I think we had... **[Interruption]** I have not admitted there are problems in relation to our policy. I think that this department, with my Assistant Minister, has actually set out a clear path to resolve some long-standing issues about our sea links. I thought we had a good debate last week and I will re-check my notes to see whether the Deputy had any pearls of wisdom in relation to solving these issues. If he has ideas

please let him communicate them to us. We are listening and we are determined to deal with the issue of sea transport. In relation to the Airport, all I will say... a new Director is now in post, the Assistant Minister has responsibility for this area and I am looking forward to great things happening at the Airport.

Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

So am I, Sir.