FORT USERS' ASSOCIATION

THE FUTURE USE OF FORT REGENT

-THE JERSEY SPORTS VILLAGE AND COMMUNITY CENTRE-

A BASIS FOR CHANGE

Presented to: **The States of Jersey**

From: **The Fort Users Association**
Written **by Roy Travert Liaison Officer**

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Reference cited:

The Roger Quinton Associates Report
Senator Ted Vibert

Contributors:

Joy Davies
John Oliver
Ann Chamier
Robert Brown

1.0 THE FORMATION OF THE FORT USERS ASSOCIATION

The Fort Users' Association was formed on 28th April 1994. Its main objective at the time was to act as a liaison group to communicate with Fort Regent's management, and to negotiate for improvements to the sports complex.

Senator Jean Le Maistre, President of the Sport Leisure and Recreation Committee and Mr. Vic Bourgoise, Chief Officer at Fort Regent, were invited as guests and agreed to attend and answer questions from those who attended the meeting. As well as the members of the public Deputy Len Norman attended in his capacity as Chairman of the Sports Council. Some of the concerns raised at that meeting were:

1. There was an obvious need for a Leisure Pool at the Fort.
2. The Jungle Jim was 'past its sell-by date'.
3. The access for wheelchairs and double buggies was inadequate.
4. The food concessions should be more geared to healthy eating.
5. The courts were insufficient as the public had very little chance of booking due to the block booking system in progress.
6. Concessions should be open at the same times as the Fort not close early evenings.
7. General Cleanliness not satisfactory.

At the close of the meeting Mr. Bourgoise said that by the end of this year (1994) the committee would have a plan for future development, especially with regard to a leisure pool. They were determined to try and provide facilities that are equal to those in many places in England.

A Steering committee was formed at this meeting and Mr. Bourgoise and Senator Le Maistre said they would be happy for the committee to hold their meetings in the Fort and they would provide a room. To which the steering Committee members expressed their thanks.

Today's Situation

Senator Mike Vibert released a press statement in November 2002 that a feasibility study into the possible relocation of sports facilities presently provided at Fort Regent, could now be provided at a purpose built centre at Le Rocquier school. This was met with an enormous amount of opposition from fort users as well as the general public.

Throughout 2003 the Fort Users Association have responded by lobbying States members with the aim to stop the removal of sports and leisure facilities from Fort Regent. The new feasibility study proposed by Education, Sport and Culture was postponed in June 2003.

Since this initial announcement, the emphasis of the association has changed; it has had to respond to recent events by having more direct involvement in what the future now holds for Fort Regent. This report has been made in response to the states of Jersey's proposals.

Fort Users Association Committee Members For 2003

Position Name	**Email Address**
Chairman	Due to Ill Health Chairman's position to be filled shortly
Vice-Chairman Mr John Oliver	jholiver@jerseymail.co.uk
Honorary Secretary Mrs Jacky Travert	honorarysecretary@supportthefort.co.uk
Honorary Treasurer Miss Ann Chamier	ann.chamier@jerseymail.co.uk
Liaison Officer Mr Roy Travert	roy@supportthefort.co.uk or Tel 07797 788903
Committee members	
Mr Arthur Falle	arthurfalle@hotmail.com
Ms Joy Davies	joydavies@jerseymail.co.uk
Mr Peter Le Corre	
Mr Brian Du Feu	
Mr Robert Brown	arran@jerseymail.co.uk

2.0 FORT REGENT-A BRIEF HISTORY

Fort Regent was built as a military fortress and was completed in 1814. It stands on top of a granite outcrop known as **Le Mont de la Ville**; it overlooks St Helier and has surrounding views over St Aubins and St Clements. This impressive site covers 22 acres in total, which includes the ramparts and Glacis Field.

In 1970 the cable car facility was opened which gave access to Fort Regent from snow hill, this was closed to public use in 1991.

The swimming pool was built on the Glacis Field and opened in 1971.

The decision to develop Fort Regent was taken in December 1967.

The following were implemented as part of the on going development:

-finances were made available and the roof added in 1974.
-the Gloucester Hall opened in 1978; this would be used as part of Fort Regent's multi-use facilities.
-the queens hall opened in 1988.

Over many years various States committee's have put forward idea's to develop Fort Regent, included amongst those proposals was the RQA report of 1997. This report recommended that Fort Regent should be redeveloped into "The Jersey Sports Village" with the centre containing exceptional competition and sports facilities.

In March 1998, Senator Jean Le Maistre presented to the States a study done by **Roger Quinton Associates** (RQA) in conjunction with two key partners, Saville Jones, Leisure Architects, and Alex Sayer Limited, Quantity Surveyors.

There is currently an in-principle approval by the States to develop Fort Regent as a centre of sporting excellence, which carried Project 18I the RQA report, by 37 votes to 8 on April 12, 2000. However, money for the development is yet to be forth coming.

The States brief for this was:

"To undertake a feasibility study on the "Fort Regent Leisure Centre" and to make recommendations which will provide the island with a modern community sports and recreation centre to meet the needs of the local and tourist population, whilst being capable of hosting international sporting events. In particular, the consultants will be required to:

1. Advise on the most modern and cost effective design to maximise both capital and future revenue budgets.

2. Advise on the synergy between the area to be designated for sport and recreation and other areas of the Fort.

3. Advise on the relationship between the proposed design and the existing swimming pool.

The overall plan contained in the report was to develop Fort Regent into the Jersey Health and Sports Centre, with EXCEPTIONAL sport and recreation facilities for the very young to the very old, as well as a valued destination for people to visit informally. Free access to the building's public areas and to the visitors centre via panoramic lifts would provide Jersey with an operationally efficient centre and a unique destination for local people and for visitors to the island.

The report continued:

"The aims of the Jersey Health and Sports Centre will be to provide"

An internationally recognised sports centre of excellence, providing opportunities for sustainable development of play, sport and recreation for people of all ages and ability; this to be the centre of coaching, offering courses from the foundation to excellence levels:

sports development advice and specialist services to athletes, sports people and the public at large on matters of fitness, health and performance, league and club management, training event organisation and fund raising.

In addition, the "**Active for life program**" will continue to be developed with general practitioners, the General Hospital and sporting organization's at all levels.

A unique venue on the island and in the Channel Islands for major indoor participant events and with the possibility of accommodating occasional conferences in excess of 1,500 delegates. An attractive visitor and information Centre interpreting the history of the Fort with appropriate retail opportunities. A valued destination for people to visit informally. An efficiently managed centre used to its optimum capacity

The feasibility study contained a number of options and the Committee, under Senator Jean Le Maistre opted for option 3.1 which read:

"This is a straightforward concept which will be valuable for local people, visitors and the States, and easy to market. There will be significant capital costs but with major reductions in net costs annually, in the region of £200,000-£500,000 per year."

The likely cost of this project would be £17 to £20 million.

This projected cost should now be updated and would in our view cost considerably less than the estimates made in 1997.

Since the RQA report was published, Jersey's economic and social climate have changed, and it is not now considered a priority by the States to redevelop Fort Regent with such a grandiose scheme.

3.0 STATES PROPOSALS VERSUS OUR PROPOSALS

In November 2002 Senator Mike Vibert released a press statement on the implementation of a feasibility study to remove all sports facilities from Fort Regent and relocate them to a purpose built centre at Le Rocquier School.

The FUA responded by lobbying States members with the aim to stop the removal of sports and leisure facilities from Fort Regent. With the continued involvement and support of various States members and in particular Senator Ted Vibert the feasibility study was postponed in June 2003. It has been apparent from the outset of these new proposals that there was an underlying push for private developers to build at Fort Regent. This was substationated by various press releases to the Jersey Evening Post by various states members.

It must be stated from the start that this report is just that, it's a report on what we and the general public would like to see created at Fort Regent. It is not meant to take the place of a properly carried out feasibility study on what may be built on the Fort Regent site. That study has already been carried out and stands as project 181 the RQA report. What has prompted us into putting forward these requests is the overwhelming public support to see Fort Regent continue as a Sports and Leisure facility. We also understand that a further study may have to be undertaken to determine what is feasible in today's economic climate. This report is not asking for the spending of £20,000,000 as stated in the RQA report. However it is asking that the needs and views of the general public be taken into account when deciding on the future of Fort Regent.

We have taken the basis for our recommendations from Project 18I, and the RQA report, although various events have now lead to some of the facilities not being required at Fort Regent, this would bring down the cost of any new development that would take place. Bearing in mind that Fort Regent has now closed its swimming pool to the general public an enormous amount of money will be saved from this closure.

In May 2003 the University of Salford released the Gambling Control Committee's **"report on the reform of gambling law in Jersey"**, this study contains recommendations that Fort Regent is used as the location for a single licence Casino in Jersey. **We would not support the inclusion of a casino into any future development at Fort Regent**. It is evident that private and commercial players have an interest to develop this public land for the benefit of private investors, and have not considered the long-term effects for the island's community as a whole. The Fort Users Association feels that if this were to happen it would be to the detriment of the Fort and its users, the general public would certainly lose an important piece of island heritage and an important social venue.

The Fort Users Association would like to see Fort Regent kept within the public domain and not put in the hands of private developers where money is the only short-term benefit for the few, rather than the long-term benefit of health and fitness to an Island community. Let us at least give our youngster's and sports players something that they can be proud of in years to come. This will only come about if the States provide modern sports and community facilities for the benefit of all residents that wish to use them.

The building of a "**Sporting Centre of Excellence"** is now considered **not** to be a priority by the now **Education, Sport & Culture Committee**. We would disagree with that view and would like to put forward the following proposals for the Education, Sport and Culture Committee to consider:

- We would like to see **full public consultation** on any further proposals that would affect Fort Regent and its users. Any decisions should be made public before any contracts are signed and implemented. This would remove the potential legal pitfalls that have befallen the "Water Front Centre".

- First and foremost the installation of high-speed lifts from snow hill should be seen as a priority. This would make access to the centre much easier for people living and working in the town area, especially at lunch times. This could possibly increase usage of the complex by 15 to 20%.

- We would like to see any future development include amenities for families and sports clubs alike. The building of family friendly restaurants should be incorporated into any new design.

- We would politely suggest that the States adopt a democratic process whereby the States of Jersey enter into consultation with the general public in a full and proper manner before taking any in principle decisions, which should be debated in the States.

- The States should consider the public interest and enjoyment of the Fort when deciding on any future development. The potential for a **"town park**" type development should also be considered.

- There should be no linking of Fort Regent with the **"Water Front Centre".** They are both separate entities in their own right. The fort is based on community activities with many clubs and associations using Fort Regent as a base to develop their respective sporting and social activities.
  The Waterfront however, has substantially more bars and nightclubs and appears to be geared toward to the adult entertainment industry. In our opinion this is the ideal venue for a Casino, possibly located into any new hotel development.

The Casino Issue

- The FUA feels that Fort Regent is an inappropriate venue to locate a gaming centre and Casino, **we would not support the building of a casino at Fort Regent**. It would be an inappropriate venue to accommodate such an adult form of entertainment. A more suitable location would be the **Waterfront Centre** in St Helier. This area already has varies nightclubs and bars, and the inclusion of a Casino would, in our opinion, only add to the centre's entertainment facilities.

The Conference Centre

- The building of a conference centre at Fort Regent may bring problems of its own. It may seem like the ideal location, but there are issues with the building of it inside the rotunda so close to the existing sports clubs and players. It may be more practical to locate it at the Waterfront if the Casino was built at the same time. The inclusion of either one of these facilities in our view could eventually lead to the removal and redistribution of the community activities based at Fort Regent. We would prefer to see the fort given over solely to the activities listed in our recommendations and the RQA report. The inclusion of the conference centre needs to be discussed in greater detail with the relevant committees, so as to clarify the long-term future of activities at the fort. If it was found that the inclusion of the conference centre was to the benefit of the fort and it's users then it should be included in any future development. We would give full public support to the building of the conference centre if there were in principle guarantees that no clubs, associations or public facilities would be removed at a later date.

  Therefore we would like to see the following activities modernised and upgraded at Fort Regent. We would like to see any development provide for all sections of the community, from the very young to the old. It is also vital that all facilities presently catered for and enjoyed at Fort Regent are retained and incorporated in any future development. In addition to this, over the years a great community spirit has developed amongst the users and we felt that this was something on which development and improvements could build on.

Modernisation

Although there has been a steady capital expenditure on the Fort, it would seem appropriate that investment and modernisation should take place on the following activities.

1. **Dedicated Sports Rooms**

    - **Gymnastics;**
    - **Martial Arts;**
    - **Squash;**
    - **Indoor Bowls;**
    - Fitness Training and Free Weights; (this has had substantial investment)
    - **Climbing Wall;**
    - Internet Style Café; (the supplement store presently supply's internet access)
    - **Over 50's club room;**
    - **The building of a bistro style restaurant with bar facilities;**
    - **Club and recreation rooms for youngsters;**
    - **The building of a Bingo hall;**
    - **The building of a Games hall for youngsters;**
    - **A pool and snooker hall;**
    - **Facilities for the young could be a trocodera type facility;**
    - **The Don Theatre is underused could, possibly, encourage Drama Groups;**
    - **Dry Ski Slope;**

This is a small list so as to identify the needs of the whole community. The RQA report should be visited for full recommendations and a comprehensive list. (See RQA report section 4.0) it must also be stated that the inclusion of a pool facility should still be retained at Fort Regent.

Shared Facilities

- **5-A-side football**
- **Roller Skating**
- **Shooting**
- **Archery**
- **Badminton**
- **Basket Ball**
- **Volley Ball**
- **Concert Hall**

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4.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The FUA has consulted with the general public through an online opinion poll and sent out questionnaires to clubs and associations that use Fort Regent to ascertain whether public opinion was in favour of Fort Regent being redeveloped into a Sporting Centre of Excellence. This has taken place since November 2002 and has certainly increased the public's awareness of the facilities already on offer at the fort.

We have also canvassed the public's view by informal discussions in talk back on radio jersey, with considerable public participation in the subject. The majority of whom are extremely supportive of the fort and its uses. It is evident by the results of our poll that there is genuine public support for Fort Regent to remain a sports and leisure centre with support for it to be redeveloped into a Sporting Centre of Excellence and Community Centre, if the funds were made available. We have gone to great lengths to ensure that we are representative of the general feeling of the public.

Our opinion poll results contained the following questions and results.

Q1 Do you use the facilities at Fort Regent.
Q2 Are you in favour of Fort Regent being closed to sport.
Q3 If Fort Regent was closed to sport would you travel to Le Rocquier school.
Q4 Are you if favour of Fort Regent being refurbished into a sporting centre of excellence.
Q5 Would you support more public consultation on the proposed closure of Fort Regent.

Fort Users Association Opinion Poll

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
YES	343	29	48	344	323
NO	17	331	300	14	37
DON'T KNOW			12	2	
No of responses	**360**	**360**	**360**	**360**	**360**
	95.28	8.06	13.33	95.56	89.72
	4.72	91.94	83.33	3.89	10.28
			3.33	0.56	
	100	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

Senator Edward Vibert had also prepared a report which he presented to the states and had the following results:

· 47% of residents use Fort Regent
· 31% of users visit twice a week
· 60 active clubs and organisations use Fort Regent every week. (this is an estimated figure as no accurate statistics are available from E.S.C.)

It is very difficult to get accurate figures as to the true numbers who actually use the fort each week as it is continually changing. Although this is true the **"Active card"** brand has enjoyed continual growth with members in excess of 3000.

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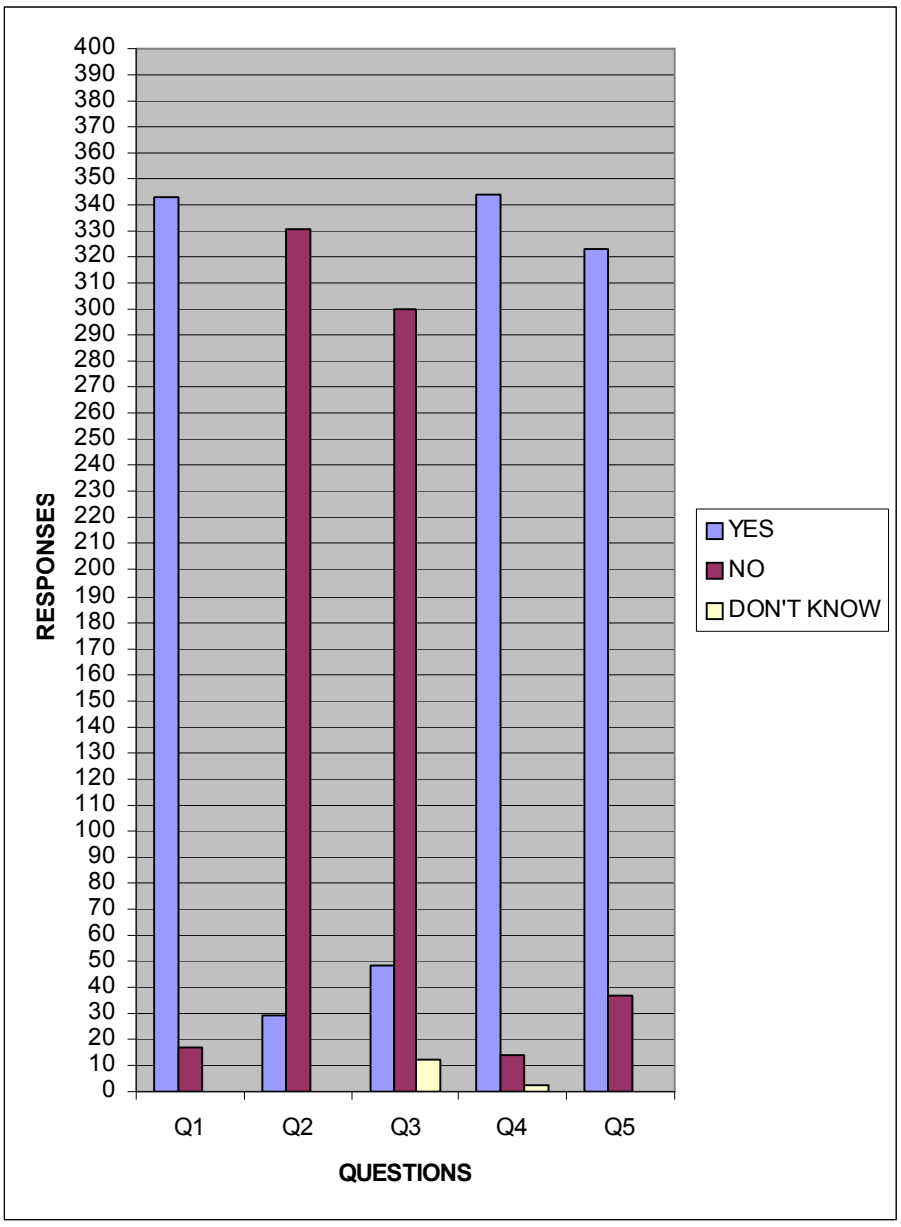
Q4 Are you if favour of Fort Regent being refurbished into a sporting centre of excellence.
Q5 Would you support more public consultation on the proposed closure of Fort Regent.



We would also like to point out that Fort Regent is public land, and that the States have a responsibility to consult with the public on its future use. Our survey clearly shows that public opinion is in favour of Fort Regent being retained as the central hub for activities in the island. The RQA report has already gone into great detail in consulting with the various sections of the community and it is our opinion that this should be used as the basis for any future development.

5.0 THE COSTS

There is no secret of the fact that the States of Jersey is heading towards a deficit in its budget in the foreseeable future. Although this may be true, there is no doubt in our mind that the States should be looking at ways to pay for the future development of Fort Regent. Whether this comes from public funds as approved in principle by the States of Jersey, or the States find alternative ways of funding the redevelopment of Fort Regent from private sector funds, alternative ways of financing Fort Regent do exist. It is up to the various States committees to discuss ways in which to achieve this.

To have a realistic perspective on costs for redevelopment at today's prices, a new feasibility study would have to be implemented. **Its emphasis should be on the retention of facilities at Fort Regent and not the removal of them**, as suggested by Senator Mike Vibert.

We would also like to point out that funding should have started in 2004 for the development of the RQA report. This is still achievable if the political desire was there to implement it. It would also be reasonable to expect, that whatever is decided should be put out to tender to achieve the best possible return for the general public.

We would also like to express our concerns that the States may waste money on the wrong type of facilities at the fort, or give away a valuable public asset to private developers. There is distrust of the ability of the States to make the right decisions.

6.0 CONCLUSION

In this report we have tried to give balanced and constructive recommendations as to what we, the Fort Users would like to see implemented at Fort Regent. There is no doubt that the people who use Fort Regent for sport and community based activities would feel a great loss if the complex was given over to private development. The loss to the local community could not be measured in monetary value alone. When the States passed project 181 by 37 votes to 8 on April 12, 2000, it was, in fact, an overwhelming vote for the health of the Island's community. This would only be achieved by providing world class facilities that would bring International recognition for some of our top sports players, as well as providing the important infrastructure that makes up a central community centre.

The building of such an innovative and modern complex was recommended to the states by Roger Quinton Associates, their report gave a fully comprehensive view of what could be built on this extensive 22-acre site. We would fully support the implementation in part or in full of their report. Any future development should be based on this report.

The states passed in principle to rebuild Fort Regent into "The Jersey Sports Village" this has not come about due to financial constraints being put on by the States of Jersey and the current economic climate. Capital spending projects have been curtailed to save public money so we must face the reality that funding may have to come from private developers wishing to invest in the building of a Casino on the island, this is one option that President of Tourism Deputy Lyndon Farnham is proposing. Bearing in mind that lottery money was used for many years to pay for the present amenities used at Fort Regent the funding of it by gambling is not a new idea.

The building of additional facilities not already housed at the fort would in our view only add to the overall success of an already established community centre. This would also have the residual effect of promoting sports led tourism for the islands tourism industry. Bringing in much needed revenue.

There is no doubt that Fort Regent Plays an historical as well as a community-based role in many Islanders lives. It would certainly be to the detriment of the island as a whole if it were allowed to be given away to private development. It should be redeveloped with full public consultation so as to enhance the lives of the very people that use it, the public of Jersey.