

2018.07.10

3.20 Deputy R.J. Rondel of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the installation of toilet facilities at People's Park: [OQ. 87/2018]

Given that People's Park is being increasingly used by the public, including many schools, and that a new children's play area is currently being installed for use by disabled as well, will the Minister provide the necessary funds and install desperately needed toilet facilities?

Deputy K.C. Lewis (The Minister for Infrastructure):

I am delighted to hear that the park is seeing more use by the public, who are enjoying the play area installed by the Parish. This is an important green lung for St. Helier and provides amenity space for both parishioners and visitors alike. Those parishioners, the public as owners of the schools, the pupils, and families, pay rates to the Parish. Commuters and other visitors using the facilities support the economy of St. Helier, providing businesses with the footfall that contributes to their continuity and success. St. Helier is not unique in providing such services; other Parishes manage their parks and open spaces and, in some cases, provide toilets. The scale is different for St. Helier, but so is the amount of rates the Parish receives. If additional toilet facilities are required, then I believe it should be provided, managed and funded, by the Parish.

3.20.1 Deputy R.J. Rondel:

Would he not agree that, because it is being used widely by the general public, toilets are urgently, desperately needed? I watch people go there, they have got small children, and they are having to go in the woods surrounding nearby. It is totally unsatisfactory. Why should it be for the Parish to provide this, where they do not in other very large parks similar to this?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I believe that toilets are provided, I believe, in St. Martin and definitely at the Elephant Park in St. Brelade, by the Parish. I was under the impression that there was a toilet there already, a toilet block, directly in front of Victoria's Monument, which, I believe, is owned and operated by the Parish.

Deputy R.J. Rondel:

Just to be clear, that toilet is by the Grand Hotel, they have to walk some 200 yards across the park, across a very busy road, to get access to it.

The Deputy Bailiff:

That is something by way of a speech and you will have a final supplementary question, so we will move on to Deputy Wickenden.

3.20.2 Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

I would just like to ask the Minister if his department does provide toilet facilities and support them in other Parishes and, if so, how many?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I do not have a list of toilet facilities, but I am sure we can fetch that for the Deputy.

3.20.3 Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier:

Would the Minister not agree with me that his answer today is completely at odds with the answer he gave when he stood for his position and he said that he would look into the inequity that is involved in the Parishes having to provide, or the Parish of St. Helier having to provide, facilities where the States provides public toilets in the major parts of the Island, such as Millbrook and Winston Churchill Memorial Gardens? He said then he would look into it; today he is saying it is up to the Parish to pay. Which is it to be?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

We need a mixture of both; we cannot just build toilets everywhere. I am just curious as to why the original block had been closed down originally in front of the monument statue, it is on the other side of the road but people have to cross the road to get to the park, so it works both ways, but more than happy to have a discussion with the Constable.

3.20.4 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Would the Minister further agree that examining this issue was part of the previous Council of Ministers' Strategic Plan; it was never looked at, and the new Chief Minister has promised that he will look at it? Will he be working with the new Chief Minister to address this essential inequity in the provision of public services?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I was not part of the previous Council of Ministers; I am part of this one, so more than happy to look at anything that comes across my table. I will take it up with the Chief Minister and my department.

3.20.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the Minister believe that 13 different authorities, with the provision of things such as roads, recycling, police, parks, gardens, and toilets, is sufficient and that maybe we need to look to create some other authorities, to add to that 13?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I think we have enough authorities; we have the 12 Parishes, plus we have the States and we have 12 police forces as well plus the States and that is the way this system works in Jersey. If someone has a better idea, more than happy to listen to it.

3.20.6 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the Minister believe that, first of all, there needs to be a consistent approach taken across all of these issues, whether they are provided by the States, or the Parish, and secondly, does he believe that, if and when the States end up finally paying their rates bill to St. Helier, then, maybe, St. Helier will be able to afford to put their own toilet in what is essentially their own park?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I think the Deputy is directing that question to the wrong Minister. I am the Minister for Infrastructure; I do not control the rates. I did not get the last bit.

The Deputy Bailiff:

I do not think that was a question; I think that was just an observation.

3.20.7 Deputy R.J. Rondel:

I would ask the Minister to put his hat on as if he had 2 young children playing in that park and they do need to use the facilities, whether disabled, or not, and it is unsatisfactory not to have those facilities there.

Would he commit, perhaps, to put temporary, portable, toilet facilities there in the meantime, like they have done outside where the ducks are?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Disability was not mentioned originally in the original question as written, but I do not believe portable toilets are really suitable for the disabled, so either we build one, or we do not.

