

STATES OF JERSEY

Education & Home Affairs Panel Hearing Cultural Strategy Review

TUESDAY, 5th OCTOBER 2010

Panel:

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour (Chairman)

Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier

Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour

Witness:

Mr. A.D. Scott Warren (L'Office du Jèrriais)

In Attendance:

Ms. S. Power (Scrutiny Officer)

[14:01]

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Helier (Chairman):

I would like to welcome everybody to this meeting of the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel. We will introduce ourselves. My name is Roy Le Hérissier, Chairman and Deputy of St. Saviour.

Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier:

Deputy Trevor Pitman, St. Helier No. 1, Vice Chairman.

Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour:

Deputy Jeremy Maçon, St. Saviour.

Ms. S. Power:

Sam Power, Scrutiny Officer.

L'Office du Jèrriais:

Tony Scott-Warren, Offici du Jèrriais from L'Office du Jèrriais. If you want that in English, Jèrriais Language Officer.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay, thank you very much, Tony. What we are doing is it might be described as a health check on the state of the cultural strategy. We are not trying to sort of disassemble the whole strategy and rebuild it, but we thought with all the issues that had arisen around the Jersey Heritage Trust, for example, which have spilled over, it appears, on to the workings of other bodies, for various reasons, before it was time, and it was time in any case to look at the strategy and we know that you play a very key role in it, so that

is why we obviously want to hear about the work that you do. So can you outline your relationship with the department, the E.S.C. (Education, Sport and Culture)?

L'Office du Jèrriais:

We generally have a good relationship with the department. We have, since December last year, a partnership agreement. We are in a slightly anomalous kind of situation because of the way that we were set up in the first place in that we are within the department and yet outside the department in so far as we are run by the Don Balleine Trust, which in itself is a very strange situation, to be employed by a charitable trust. The way that we were started up in the first place was that, as you know, in 1998 there was the States debate on the possibility of introducing Jèrriais into schools, which was on the back of a survey that had been done of parents of children of primary school age in 1997. They had 790-odd parents saying that they would be interested in Jèrriais lessons if they were set up for children and so the debate took place and a sum of money was voted for the setting up of a 2-year trial. That sum was approximately, I think, £121,000 for the 2-year period, which covered the employment of a language officer, the setting up of the programme, the devising of teaching materials and the employment of a number of assistant teachers. We went through the trial period. The Don Balleine was asked to set up this programme on the basis that the fact that they were already established publishers of Jèrriais. The Don Balleine Trust had been set up in the early 1950s to administer the testament of Arthur Balleine who died in 1943 leaving a considerable sum of money for the preservation and promotion of the native language of the Island. He had no descendants and so he had nobody to leave his money to, so he decided to put it to a good cause, which the Trust had started out by publishing Frank Le Maistre's mammoth dictionary, the Jèrriais to French dictionary, and a number of other publications followed down the years. Then in 1999 we asked to set up the teaching programme ... or 1998. So I got luckily employed as the first Jersey Language Teaching Co-ordinator, was the title at that time. We did the 2-year trial. We are deemed to be successful. We had children by that stage who were moving into secondary school and they expressed a desire to carry on learning Jèrriais when they got to secondary school, so a proposition was taken to the States in, I think, 2002 for a further 5-year period of funding and the level of funding, I think, was £105,000 per year. Now that was seen at the time as being

£105,000 each year for 5 years, and therefore for the first 2 years we would be well under budget, with the third year we would be on budget, and the following 2 years we would be using up the surplus which worked well. But when we came out of that we were in the strange situation of having to explain why we needed an increase in funding because we were now at the level of the median plus 2 years and yet we were being assessed as being still on the median grant, so we had considerable discussions about that, which eventually led through the partnership agreement being signed last year and our grant now is £136,600 per annum, which is paid in quarterly tranches. For that we have 2.8 teachers ...

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Sorry, just to interrupt, Tony, your salaries are paid to the Jersey Teaching...?

L'Office du Jèrriais:

No. No, they are not. Okay? When we first set up the programme the salaries were assessed on the basis of parity with ... in my situation with the parity with the head of department in secondary schools and the other teachers were pro-rata on that. However, the way that things have worked out we have lagged considerably and at the moment I am in the situation where my staff and me have not had a pay rise for over 2 and a half years and until we get some, you know, increment on the grant there is no fat in our budget. Over 98 per cent of the grant goes in staff costs, and that was another thing that was working a bit oddly a couple of years ago because we were assessed by Education apparently as having a staff cost of around about 95 per cent, so when we did get an increase in grant in line with the other teachers, it was not covering the full amount, so it is a bit of an odd situation all around really.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Don Balleine itself does not contribute any money directly to that grant?

L'Office du Jèrriais:

That is correct. That is correct. Don Balleine, the accounts are kept completely separate. We obviously have a publication section, if you like, an account that is entirely for the administration of the Trust and

separately we have the educational side.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Who do you answer to in Education?

L'Office du Jèrriais:

Well, directly to the Minister ultimately.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Yes, but indirectly.

L'Office du Jèrriais:

Well, we have liaison through Rod McLoughlin and through Cliff Chipperfield, so they are our sort of immediate line managers, if you like, and then obviously up to Mario Lundy to the Minister.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Then I will keep quiet ... but in terms of given Education's emphasis these days on qualitative assessments, who does that in respect to your unit?

L'Office du Jèrriais:

We have ongoing assistance of the teaching, if that is, you know, what we are aiming at, which was last done about a year ago. We had Miranda Kelleher from Hautlieu come in and looked at what we were doing, and I think that there is sort of a plan to carry that on. Also the fact that we are possibly moving towards a service level agreement is also going to mean that we will have more assessment on that side.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay, thank you. The next question will follow up, we will move to Deputy Pitman.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

You have probably answered the second one anyway about how you allocate your grant, so could I ask if you could enlarge on that, but what are the current key issues facing you at the moment, apart from the fact that you have not had a pay rise since ... **[Laughter]**

L'Office du Jèrriais:

Yes, and mileage allowance has not increased either. The key issue, as far as I see it, at the moment, my big one, is succession. I am over 60 years old. I am going to be 61 this month. Colin Ireson, my other full-time teacher, is also just approaching 61. Luckily, Geraint Jennings is considerably younger, but Geraint is going to stand in the elections in 2011 and if he was successful at that I would be likely to lose him. That is sort of a little bit of an indeterminate in that, you know, I cannot allocate a resource to, you know, succession there without knowing whether he is going to get voted in or not. But certainly in the case of Colin and me, I think Colin is talking about 2013 probably being the time that he will be thinking of. I am thinking of 2014 as my possible retirement. In that case, we have to find somebody who can be trained up to take our places and it is not just simply a matter of, you know, finding an off the peg teacher, if you like. It is going to be, I think, having discussed this with Cliff Chipperfield and Rod McLoughlin, I think we will be looking at probably a one year training overlap, if you like, before we leave the department and it is going to be somebody who maybe will come in and do the local teacher training on the Island at the same time as learning the language. We have got some misgivings as to whether one can get sufficiently firm knowledge of Jèrriais in 12 months but if it is a language graduate who has maybe come from a French background at university then I think, you know, the chances are that they would be able to, if they were fairly well immersed into it, but it is a very short period.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Does that not worry you in itself that if Jèrriais is almost so fragile that if anything happens to you 2 or 3 individuals, that seems to me to say there is just not enough commitment from government to supporting you. Would that be fair?

L'Office du Jèrriais:

I can not say whether there is not enough commitment from the Government but, yes, Jèrriais is hugely fragile. I mean it is a hidden treasure in the Island but at the same time, you know, the figures that we have, 1989 we have 5,700 speakers; 5,700 who said they could speak Jèrriais. By the 2001 census that figure had come down to 2,700 and if you extrapolate that to today and looking at the profile of the people who were responding in the 2001 census, we are talking now my estimate is 1,500 to 1,600 speakers left. Now the only thing I cannot quantify is what size the blip in the younger group is going to be because for the first time in the 2001 census we had an increase in speakers under 20. That was the first time it ever happened and that was clearly the result of the teaching programme for Jèrriais. You know, how many of those in the next census will respond and say: "Yes, I can speak Jèrriais at some level"? I do not know and, you know, we do not know what level of proficiency the people who said: "Yes, I can speak Jèrriais" actually had. We do know that the really worrying, from my point of view, side was that the figure that they put on the people who used Jèrriais regularly, who speak it regularly, was 113 and, you know, 3 of those are in the office - myself and Geraint and Colin. I probably know the 110 of them as well and most of those are, you know, in their very senior years so we are losing numbers at a rate of knots.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

What is the strategy to try and allay those fears, and with just the 3 of you, as I say, it is quite fragile it seems? What is the strategy that is being ...?

L'Office du Jèrriais:

I do not think there is any clear strategy other than the fact that we are looking at, you know, succession and trying to plan for retirement. If, you know, one of us gets struck down by the maker all of a sudden there is not a plan as such but, you know, we would then I guess be going to Education and saying: "You know, something needs doing now."

[14:15]

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

It is probably, and I am just being devil's advocate asking this, but when you think some of the decisions that Government, let us say the Council of Ministers, have taken why it is important the Jèrriais is maintained?

L'Office du Jèrriais:

Because Jèrriais is an essential part of our culture in the Island. It is, you know, our language and people say to me: "Why do you bother teaching it, it is a waste of time, nobody speaks it; you are better speaking Portuguese, Polish, anything other than Jèrriais?" but Jèrriais is our own language. It makes sense of where we are. It explains people's surnames, it explains our place names. You know, when you look around you it is around you all the time but it is hidden. You have to go out and look for it, and one of the things that I feel strongly, and this is leading into the cultural strategy side of things, is that increasing the amount of signage in Jèrriais is essential, and that is a place that I do think the States has to take the lead. One of our functions at the office is the promotion of the language. We do not entirely do education the whole time, we do promotion of language and we are talking to a number of businesses with varying degrees of success, as you would expect, but you know when you look around in the different States departments, where is the Jèrriais? And there is lots of stuff that can be done at absolutely no cost whatsoever. You know, things as simple as email tag lines, and I know some States Members have adopted the Jèrriais tag lines, which I am very grateful for, but that could be done on a States-wide basis. Departments could have ... When they are replacing signage, why do they not have Jèrriais signs put in? If you go into the Education Department in the Isle of Man every door is either bilingual or monolingual Manx and everybody accepts that that is the norm, and the Government owned vehicles that are driving around the Island in the Isle of Man which are all bilingual so Manx is in your face. It is there, it is stuck in front of you. If you go to the Isle of Man you cannot avoid it. You come to Jersey and unless you are really looking for it, Jèrriais is not ... We do not value the language in my opinion as highly as we should do and because of the fact we have this trichotomy, if you like, of

having, you know, English as our language of day-to-day communication now, of having French in official status everywhere throughout the Island, but Jèrriais is the spoken language of the Island by tradition.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Can I ask the question, obviously you have seen in the States just a week ago we were happy to give £400,000 to finance for an office yet we cannot support learning in Durrell. Do you get any support from finance who obviously made £800-900 million profit in a bad year? Have you approached any of them?

L'Office du Jèrriais:

I have tried to think ... No, we really have not approached apart from when we published our first school textbook we got some sponsorship for that from ... two of the banks but no we have not really ... I mean I have not made the effort to go out to business houses and say: "You know, we need some assistance" so maybe that is something I should be looking at.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

In your view, how should the implementation of the cultural strategy be progressed and are there any areas that should be focused on in the immediate future?

L'Office du Jèrriais:

Well, obviously my thing is the Jèrriais side, and that is all I can talk about because although I was involved at various stages with the discussions that took place before the setting up of the cultural strategy, obviously the language is what I am into. What we see as being, I suppose, the important thing from our point of view is the formulation of a language plan for Jersey, and that is something that takes place in a lot of other minority language areas and, you know, look at Wales or Scotland or Ireland. Although we are outside the European charter on regional and minority languages, which was something that we had hoped would be signed up to but apparently it has gone on the back boiler for I am not quite

sure for what reasons, we feel that there is a lot of value.. that by devising a language plan we could have some firm targets to be aiming at and we think that that is important - and I am looking at some of my notes here - so that we would be getting the same effect as we would get from ratifying the European Convention but without having to go down that route, and we think that that is important and that there should be a language plan. One of the things with the cultural strategy is increasing the number of speakers of Jèrriais. Now, I do not know what that means to you. I mean to me it does not mean getting 2 old ladies to chat together in a kitchen in St. Ouen. What I would like to see is that the whole populace of the Island adopts 2 or 3 phrases that could be used on a regular basis - *bouônjour, à bétôt, jé sis d'charme* and *mèrcie bein des fais* - or something like that; very simple phrases. Getting more people to do that in, say, hospitality would show that the Island is different to our visitors. It is the evidence of being in a different place. It is the individuality of the Island. Does that cover some of it?

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

You mentioned that the partnership agreement was signed last year. Have you found that, because there was the theme that we found in all the cultural bodies, is that with the new ministerial team, a greater focus has been put on cultural things? Would you care to comment?

L'Office du Jèrriais:

Yes, very much so. I do think that that sort of ... it has meant that we feel that we are being, I suppose, valued more than we were because of the fact that we did not have any formal agreement. We were not 100 per cent sure of what we were supposed to be doing, what we could expect from Government. Having the partnership agreement in place has meant that we have it in writing. I think I can leave a copy for the panel if that would be interesting. It has laid things out so that we are aware of where our responsibilities are. We know how much we are expected to do in the way of promotional work for the language and language support within the community rather than just saying: "Well, you know, your job is education. You know, the grant is supplied by the States so that you can teach Jèrriais to school children." I have always felt that there is a much wider need than just simply providing the textbooks and the teachers to go into the classroom. You have to make the language, as far as possible, something

real for the children to be able to see it outside the confines of the classroom.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Make it live.

L'Office du Jèrriais:

Yes, absolutely and, you know, anything that we can do in that respect ... One of the things that concerns me with moving towards a service level agreement is that although it is going to task what we are supposed to do, it does not lay down what is going to be done for us.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Did you write the current agreement with E.S.C.? Was that a joint endeavour?

L'Office du Jèrriais:

It was a joint endeavour, yes. We had a number of meetings with Cliff and with Rod and it was done through agreement. Rod did spend quite a lot of time with us looking up what we were actually doing and I wrote several reports and did some analysis of how the staff were occupying their time, and the result of it was that we had the partnership agreement which seems to cover all the bases, if you like.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

You mentioned in reference to Trevor's questions that you want more signage, you want this, you want that. Who do you go to? Do you go to Rod? When you say, you know, in order to move things forward we have got to do A, B and C, who do you go to?

L'Office du Jèrriais:

Initially, we do go to Rod. He is our initial point of contact with the Education Department so, yes, but I mean outside of that I am not quite sure who we should approach to get that forwarded. I mean obviously in some cases we have had some of what I think are quite major successes. For example, if

you go across Royal Square and look in the window of Maines you will see that there is a whole display there of Jèrriais connected with jewellery and jewellers. We did a trail around town during the summer of Jèrriais concerned with different places so a trail called *des Patholes et des Pliaches*, Words and Places, using Jèrriais poetry and the English translation alongside and some of the display boards are still up around town. In fact, there is one in the porch of the Town Church I saw as I passed on the way here, which is great because it is leaving something, you know, tangible in place for the future. I know that the Town Church wants to hang on to that and have it on display for as long as possible. So that is being done in conjunction with the Town Centre Manager and St. Helier has found a small budget to be able to do that kind of thing. So the next one we are doing is for the *Faîs'sie d'Cidre*, the Cider Festival, in October. Gosh, it is already here. We have got the cider-making taking place at Hamptonne as usual and we are obviously going to be involved there because it is, you know, the traditional country base for cider-making, but at the same time if you look at the tradition where was most of the cider being sold, where was most of the cider being consumed? It was in St. Helier and so there is a very good reason for bringing some of the language into the town that would have been associated.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Does anyone politically lobby on your behalf because you have got Les Anglais(?), you used to have one prominent politician who was very active in your community?

L'Office du Jèrriais:

We did. Yes, yes, Senator Le Maistre.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

We know from what we hear from people like the National Trust - that will be clarified this afternoon - and people like the Société, they are sort of inching their way more into ... well, making representations on areas like planning and then once they make it on planning they realise they have got to go on the policy behind an application so they then start talking about policy. I mean how is that done within your community?

L'Office du Jèrriais:

We do not have a direct route like that. We think we feel in some ways we are outside of the situation. You are right; we did have Senator Jean Le Maistre as our champion, if you like, and obviously there are still a number of Members in the States who are Jèrriais speakers. We do not sort of look on any of them as being particularly our champions if you like. If I had to name one I guess it would be Connétable Ken Vibert but we have not really gone down the same route as the other heritage groups because we have not had the need to.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Even though you think it will apply, as I said, to the questions, even though you think all the kind of contextual work that has to be done is in your view not being done to the degree you would wish?

L'Office du Jèrriais:

Yes. I think so, yes. I think that the fact that things are in the cultural strategy does not necessarily mean that they happen.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Yes, I think we have sussed that as well.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Yes, it took us a long time but we got there. **[Laughter]**

L'Office du Jèrriais:

But certainly I think, you know, that ... I am going to stop it there.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Can I ask, years ago obviously the media used to do a lot more for the language. I mean it used to be ...

On Channel you used to get the news in Jèrriais years ago, I seem to remember or very late at night.

L'Office du Jèrriais:

No, that was in French rather than Jèrriais.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Was it? I know I was still in primary school at the time.

L'Office du Jèrriais:

Okay, well, Channel ran it when I was working there and it was that they had to produce one hour of Jèrriais or Guernésiais per year which is ... I mean it is peanuts; absolute peanuts.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Laughable, is it not?

L'Office du Jèrriais:

Then that was even dropped I think when they got subsumed into the ITV network on a far more centralised format. In fact, one of the reasons that I stopped making programmes was the fact that they ... because I was still producing Jèrriais or Guernésiais after I left Channel Television. You know, in my current job I was taking my holiday time to produce programmes for them but then finding they were being transmitted at half past midnight and the audience for those kind of programmes was the over 60s who were in bed by 10.00 p.m., you know, having had their Horlicks at 10.00 p.m., so there is no chance that it was going to hit the kind of audience that wanted it. Radio-wise, BBC, Radio Jersey still does the Lettre Jèrriaise which is about 5 minutes about once a week, retransmitted once. Also available is listen again iPlayer which, in fact, they get as many people listening on the internet as they do listening to it live now and if not slightly more.

[14:30]

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Which would suggest it is a younger audience I would have thought.

L'Office du Jèrriais:

Yes, it would but it is also sort of like ... I was going to use the word diaspora but there are people, particularly in Canada, who will listen into it to hear Jèrriais being spoken because it is sort of the language of their grandparents and great grandparents and so on. There are a number of people, academics in various places around the world, who we know also listen to it on a regular basis. Apart from that I used to do a 20 minute slot with the late John Uphoff on Radio Jersey and that disappeared after his death unfortunately, and I have made some efforts to try and get it back on but without great success. I would dearly love to get into Channel 103 because that is the kind of target audience that I want, I want the young people, and they have vacillated basically. They said that they were considering it and that was back in about March and I have still heard nothing further. Again, I have not chased it up yet but I will be. The *J.E.P (Jersey Evening Post)* has a column roughly once every 10 days which is Jèrriais and a synopsis in English. It used to be a Jèrriais with a translation to English but they agreed that they could have more Jèrriais and get people to work on it rather than spoon-feed them an English article as well, but that is very much dependent on myself, Geraint and Colin to produce it every week. Apart from that, you know, we are also using new media so we have got our own blog, we have got our own YouTube space, so there is Jèrriais available on both of those. We have our own website which we set up earlier this year and we have been using the Education V.L.E. (Virtual Learning Environment) also to access the children.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I went on the website.

L'Office du Jèrriais:

What did you think of it?

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I could not read it but ... [Laughter]

L'Office du Jèrriais:

Did you like the pictures? [Laughter]

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I liked the pictures though. Scholarship is not the word I am looking for but what sort of mechanisms do we use to promote it, to encourage the speaking? Are there any, apart from the things like the Inspectorate(?), I suppose?

L'Office du Jèrriais:

Yes, it is certainly a prime one but there are lots and lots of things that we could be doing. I mean one thing that I got was that in my opinion we should be targeting prospective parents because they are going to be bringing up children at some stage and they should be told that they have the opportunity to bring their child up Jèrriais-speaking or to be using Jèrriais in the home and that would, you know, put Jèrriais there right from the very word go. We have produced a number of things like a book, *Jèrriais for Parents and Grandparents*, which is designed for the ones who already have children to give them some ideas of games they can play, things to do around the house like sticking post-its on furniture to say what it is in Jèrriais and things like that, which is okay for kids who read, but I think we should be looking at maybe teaming up with the Health and Social Services to put Jèrriais into antenatal classes, you know, to give prospective mum's a list of some very simple vocabulary that she can use. That is certainly one way to try and stimulate from the word go.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

You mentioned once, Tony, in fact I thought you would mention it more times, you mentioned the example of the Isle of Man because I know in a way they have been a beacon for you.

L'Office du Jèrriais:

Oh, yes. Absolutely, yes.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I mean can you explain briefly for us, we keep getting told the results there are quite wonderful in some respects, how does their programme work and is it possible to replicate it in Jersey in your view?

L'Office du Jèrriais:

How their programme works is that they have got an advantage over us. In fact, they have a number of advantages over us. First of all, they had more funding when they first got started. The situation in the Isle of Man is that their last native speaker died in 1979, a gentleman called Ned Maddrell, and they had a ... sorry, in 1975 in fact. In 1979 they did a Gallup survey of the quality of life in the Isle of Man and one of the things that came out of that was the fact that people felt that the language was important and something needed to be done to keep it going, much as I was saying when I started learning Jèrriais, something needs to be done to keep this going. They set up the education programme and the teachers that they had were from the Education Department as opposed to us where we are all outsiders, we are not part of the department; we are external to it. They set it up so that some of the teaching at least was done with curriculum time. We are extra-curricular basically. We do get some internal curriculum time, but a small amount, and the result of that was that they had over 1,000 children a year learning Manx where we had around about 200. So I think that probably spells it out fairly clearly that putting it within the curriculum would give us far more children learning Jèrriais. Even if it meant, as I think it would, that we would not be able to hit every school. At the moment I think that we spread ourselves very, very thinly. We go into a school for half an hour once a week outside the school time, you know, either before school, lunch time or after school. We are often in accommodation that is not exactly appropriate. We do not have access in most schools to the electronic whiteboards. In some cases, we do not have access to tables and chairs. We have children who are sitting on bean bags eating their lunch while trying to spend their half hour learning Jèrriais and so, you know, we are in a difficult situation. I

think that ideally from our point of view we would reduce the number of schools that we went to. We would go in first thing in the morning and we would stay there for the morning and we would teach children at all different levels because another thing that we cannot do at the moment is to offer Jèrriais to every year within the school. We would normally start at year 4. If we are going to take a group in year 4, we stay with that group until they move out of the school after year 6 which means that for the next 2 years of course they do not get it offered until the first of those year 4s is by then in year 6 and we will get a maximum of 12 months Jèrriais before they move on to secondary school.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

You are obviously being very diplomatic but to me if it is kids having their lunch and being asked to learn what is probably quite difficult to many, sitting on bean bags, not even tables and chairs, that suggests we are just playing lip service to promoting it.

L'Office du Jèrriais:

It varies from school-to-school to be quite honest. In some cases, we have huge amounts of support from the head teacher and the school ethos is such that Jèrriais is very much welcomed there. In others, yes, you are absolutely right; lip service is the way to describe it.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Have we got head teachers who speak the language? I suppose that helps if you have already got a convert.

L'Office du Jèrriais:

I do not think there are any who speak it themselves but I know of at least 2 or 3 whose parents did and who would have heard it around home. The head of Plat Douet ...

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

A great school of course.

L'Office du Jèrriais:

Bel Royal ... Yes, there is a couple anyway but it is, or it feels from my point of view very much as though it is from the head teacher and what his or her attitude to us that spells out what kind of assistance and co-operation we get. Certainly, I mean with Bel Royal as an example, at the moment we go in there on a Wednesday morning. My teacher goes in there and does an 8.15 a.m. lesson with the year 4s, does a 9.10 a.m. lesson with the year 5s and does a 9.50 a.m. lesson with the year 6s. That way is beautiful; we can cover the school perfectly. Mind you, I would like to be starting at nursery level but that is another thing, you know, where the children are far more sensitive to language, the under 5s. We started off with year 5 and year 6 only and we moved to year 4 because they were starting ... Originally when we started up they started learning French in year 4 and then after a few years they moved French to start year 5 so we thought, okay, we will start Jèrriais a year earlier so then French is running on the back of Jèrriais and not the other way around.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Back to the Isle of Man, I am quite interested, Tony ...

L'Office du Jèrriais:

Yes, sorry.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

No, no, it is okay. Because much play has been made of the success but you mentioned about the fact that you want sort of dialogue to start occurring within families. How do they make that jump from the school system to getting traction within the family setting?

L'Office du Jèrriais:

You have to have a number of different aspects to it. One of them is that thing that I was saying about going to the parents before the children are even born and sort of putting the idea into parent's minds

because, you know, a lot of young people will not even think about that. It does not occur to them that they could use some of their language, and that is what has happened in the Isle of Man, so they start at that level. They have got organisations that are concerned with nursery teaching. They have got organisations that are parents that are interested in the primary school aspect. They seem to have come from a slightly different viewpoint to us. They appear to ... Prior even to getting the teaching thing off the ground there they seem to have had a ground swell of younger people who are into the language and that has not happened here, so we have got, you know, grandparents and great grandparents but we have not got the lower levels and I am not sure exactly how you can encourage it. I do think the body that we are building up of ex-Jèrriais students in a lot of cases will have the view that they wanted to see something done to keep the language going even if they have only done it for one or 2 years in primary school, and I think that that builds it into the community and I hope that that is going to the way that we can move. I often describe what we are doing as seed-sowing. You do not know when the seeds are going to come up but you are hopeful that eventually there will be some pretty flowers.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Do the Education Department buy into this notion that the language will at some point arrive at take-off?

L'Office du Jèrriais:

You would have to ask them rather than me on that. I think that there are a number of individuals within the department who think that it can. Whether that is an overall view you would have to ask the Minister; I do not know. I mean I know that there are a lot ... There is a lot of goodwill towards the language within the department. Converting that into practical action is the challenge I suppose.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Jeremy, anything?

Deputy J.M. Macon:

Nothing further to ask, thank you.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

No, it has been very informative.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Well, I was just going to ... Sorry, I will carry on just another point. I mean we are obviously studying the cultural strategy and we are studying you. Well, I mean it has been immensely interesting because we are studying you within the context of that strategy. Jeremy did ask you what areas were you going to focus on in the immediate future. You know, do you ever have the feeling ... let me be very sort of leading in the question: do you ever have the feeling that, as Trevor said, the strategy is struggling with all sorts of priorities? We know money is only available for some and is available for others. We have got these immense physical issues like how to maintain the Opera House and St. James and so forth. How do you get your voice heard in that strategy?

L'Office du Jèrriais:

Just try jumping up and down and shouting as much as possible. It is a matter of just talking to everybody that you possibly can. You know I am often accused of getting up on a soap box and shouting and I do that, and we do that physically as well. We were in West Centre the other day doing exactly that. It is just keeping ... you know you just have to keep plugging on and that is the way I have been working for 20-odd years or, you know, before I even took on the job. To keep the language in people's mind is the important thing. You have to remember that we have done a huge amount of work in changing attitudes towards the language. If you think back to the 1960s even, 1970s probably, there was antipathy towards it. You know the education system which became compulsory in 1840-something had done its best to eradicate Jèrriais. You hear the stories of the Welsh "Not" in Wales and the same kind of thing was going on here. Children were being beaten for speaking Jèrriais.

[14:45]

Even in my day at Victoria College one boy used the word “âgache” instead “gâteau” and was ridiculed by the French teacher for a year as being a Jersey peasant. That was one of the things that got me sort of a little bit fired up for Jèrriais in the early days. The job of changing attitudes is a long term one. There are still people who will tell you that: “Oh, it is a waste of time.” I think the number has reduced. I do not think we are going to convince everybody that Jèrriais is worth hanging on, worth saving, worth putting effort into but my own feeling is that it is our own language, and I come back to that. It is our language and people will say, you know, why do you not put more effort into supporting Polish and Portuguese communities, but they have already got national authorities that do that. They have their own support system. We have to do it for our own language. Jersey undervalues its own culture I think not only on the language. I mean for example on the Blue Plaque scheme around the Island, how many people who are mentioned on Blue Plaques are from Jersey? You can find out where Delius stayed and D.H. Lawrence and, yes, people like that. The only plaque for a Jersey person is not on a Blue Plaque sign; it is the Wace one that was put up by the Société in the Square, but there is not anything else. We do not celebrate our own people. We have our own artists, we have our own writers and yet we look at what has been successful outside the Island and celebrate that without looking at what we have ourselves.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Good, well, you have given us considerable food for thought. You have almost done it but we will try again, are there any further final thoughts you would like to leave us with? Anything you feel we may have misinterpreted? Any wrong ends of the stick we have got?

L’Office du Jèrriais:

I hope not. I hope that I have been as accurate as possible with all of this, I think. I would hope that, you know, when things come up to do with Jèrriais in the House that perhaps I can count on you to support them please, and anything else that you can think of that will assist us then please do so, because our language is on the red list of endangered languages and, you know, it is in extreme danger. I would like to think we can at least delay its death. I would like to think that we can do more than that. That is

certainly my aim.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay, well, on behalf of the panel I would like to thank you very much. We have seen, although we are not here to judge your passion and commitment, it is very evident and it is very, very commendable and we thank you very much for your very thorough evidence.

L'Office du Jèrriais:

Thank you. Thanks very much indeed.

[14:48]