

4.9 The Deputy of St. Mary of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding cuts at the Jersey Heritage Trust:

Can the Minister explain how the cuts at the Jersey Heritage Trust will help the Education, Sport and Culture Department achieve the goals with respect to culture and heritage in the States Strategic Plan, and can he explain how he intends to proceed in this area going forward?

Deputy J.G. Reed of St. Ouen (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

Over the last 12 months I have been working closely with the Jersey Heritage Trust to address the financial crisis they found themselves in and every effort has been made to ensure that the care of our Island heritage is undertaken by an organisation fit for purpose and sustainable for the future. Information contained in 3 independent reports covering all activities undertaken by Jersey Heritage Trust has helped inform the department and the trust to determine the best way forward. Having considered the findings of these reports I have agreed an approach with Jersey Heritage Trust which, with the support of the States, will enable it to realign and reprioritise its activities. I regret the loss of posts at the Jersey Heritage Trust but accept that the Trust needs to manage its affairs within the resources available. My aim is to do what I can to support the Trust in the restructuring process, which is focused on ensuring that our heritage is able to be enjoyed both now and in the future. I am presently preparing a proposition which I will bring to the States to set out what I believe the States needs to do in order to secure the future of the Trust and the vital work it undertakes for the Island. This is consistent, I believe, with my responsibilities as Minister for Education, Sport and Culture and the aims and objectives in the States Strategic Plan.

4.9.1 The Deputy of St. Mary:

The Minister has referred to sustainability and the Trust acting within the resources available, he has not really spelt out the gravity of what has happened at the Trust. We have lost 15 people with 148 years service between them, that is 10 years each, and specifically I would like to ask the Minister how he thinks that outsourcing schools' education is going to work? There used to be obviously a post within J.H.T. (Jersey Heritage Trust) for doing schools work. How does he think that outsourcing that can help the cause of Heritage awareness in the Island, especially among our children? How does he think that introducing charges for children will achieve the goal of making our children more aware of the heritage of the Island?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Starting on the matter of the resources available, if the Deputy had - and I presume he must have - read the reports that have already been published, it is quite clear that the Jersey Heritage Trust found themselves in a situation with a £550,000 annual structural deficit which needed to be dealt with. As such it is only right that the Trust is required to manage its affairs appropriately while at the same time the States and, indeed, my department acknowledging that they need help to deal with the more fundamental matters that are, again, raised in those reports. With regard to proposals to outsource certain areas that are currently conducted and provided by Jersey Heritage Trust, I am presently not able to provide details on that matter because that is a responsibility of the Jersey Heritage Trust and it alone. I do know, however, that discussions have been taking place with employees to consider alternative ways of providing the service and I believe this is ongoing. Thank you.

4.9.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Would the Minister assure the House that when the cutbacks - be they necessary or not - took place at the Trust, was - in a sense - the misery shared between management grades and non-management grades?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I am aware that the restructuring process is still ongoing and, as such, all areas of the Jersey Heritage Trust activities and its organisation are being looked at.

4.9.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Could the Minister tell us how many formally defined management grades were removed and can he give the House an assurance that front line services which produce revenue and which allow accessibility to sites have been retained to the fullest possible degree.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I am unable again to provide the Deputy with the particular information regarding the management post because I have not been privy to and actively engaged in the day-to-day work of the Jersey Heritage Trust which is quite properly their responsibility. All I am aware of is that the restructuring process is ongoing and they are seeking to achieve a reduction in the structural deficit of approximately £350,000. I am just trying to think of the other question. Could the Deputy remind me on the other part of his question?

4.9.4 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Yes, when the Minister reviewed the cuts was he absolutely certain in his mind that accessibility to sites - provision of front line services - were as strong as they could be?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Absolutely, and one of the first instructions that I gave to the Jersey Heritage Trust is that there should be no - and I repeat, no - permanent site closures. I accept that we are in difficult financial times, however the Trust and the Island need to be able to react to improvements which I hope will be coming in the not too distant future.

[11:00]

4.9.5 The Deputy of St. John:

Will the Minister explain how his proposed 2 per cent cuts for the coming year and 10 per cent thereafter affect Jersey Heritage Trust and has he put in to the Council of Ministers his response on the 2 per cent cuts which were due in last week?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Discussions on the 2 per cent cuts are ongoing at this stage. I will inform the Deputy that I am not seeking to deliver 2 per cent cuts on each section of the services that I provide because I acknowledge, as in the case of Jersey Heritage Trust, they have issues and spending pressures that need to be properly dealt with and considered by this House. I would like to remind this Assembly that commitments were given along with this cultural strategy back in 2005, however no resources were provided to ensure that the necessary opportunities and the services that were required were able to be delivered, hence the current state that Jersey Heritage Trust find themselves in.

4.9.6 The Deputy of St. John:

Supplementary on that? The Minister has not answered my question on whether or not he had submitted his document on cuts for 2011 of 2 per cent. Will he answer it and tell us when in fact he will be giving it to the Council of Ministers?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I have already answered the question and I do not propose to repeat myself.

4.9.7 Deputy M. Tadier:

Would the Minister explain how the closure of Hampton is consistent with point 15 of the Strategic Plan to protect our unique culture and identity?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Hampton has not been closed. Indeed just this weekend it was enjoyed by hundreds of people and the challenge, I think, for the Island as a whole and Jersey Heritage Trust is to make and maximise the use of the sites available. That is exactly what I believe that they are doing. I would hope that in the coming months that Hampton will be enjoyed by many, many more people.

4.9.8 Deputy M. Tadier:

The Minister is being slightly disingenuous. I cannot help feeling we are playing with words. To all intents and purposes Hampton has been shut ordinarily so members of the public simply cannot go up there, even in the summer tourists cannot go up there in the peak season to visit what is a very beautiful old farmhouse scenario. Will the Minister simply accept that this is a concession that we should not have had to have made and that it is not consistent with point 15 of the Strategic Plan and that something needs to be done very quickly so that it can be reopened for locals and for tourists alike?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I would like to see Hampton used more than it is presently proposed. The reality is that Hampton was losing over £100,000 a year. £100,000 a year. Now, there is an issue that we need to deal with and it is how much do the public and the Island contribute to ensure that our heritage type sites can remain open and accessible to the public. I know it is difficult sometimes to see restricted opening hours but I would just reiterate that Hampton is not permanently closed for business. Yes, people will be restricted to access it at certain times, however I would hope and encourage all the members of the public to take the opportunity to reinforce the view that many of us hold that Hampton is a useful heritage site that needs to be preserved for future generations.

The Bailiff:

Deputy of St. Mary, do you wish to ask a final question?

4.9.9 The Deputy of St. Mary:

Yes, thank you. I have to try and remember what I was going to say. Does the Minister agree with 2 aspects of what the Jersey Heritage Trust ... there is a lot of doom and gloom around the Jersey Heritage Trust but there are 2 things: one is that last year they increased their membership by 40 per cent, they got nearly 50 per cent more income from the Jersey Museum than 2008 and so on. There are a lot of successes and I just want the Minister to confirm that he accepts those successes as

real ones and also that the Locum Report, which is one of the 3 reports, which looked at the functioning of the Trust as opposed to simply looking at the money, said on several occasions in that report that the performance of the Jersey Heritage Trust was excellent, for example the level of penetration with the resident and U.K. leisure market ...

The Bailiff:

It is quite a long question, Deputy.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

... is very high and they also point out the admissions money per visitor is also very high. Would the Minister first of all agree that the J.H.T. is a successful organisation and, secondly, would he agree with Locum's other statement: "Virtually no single heritage organisation or museum service in the country generates enough income to cover operating costs" and does he accept the implications of that statement?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I support most of what the Deputy says. I believe that Jersey Heritage Trust have been successful in providing a whole range of activities for the Islanders and visitors alike to enjoy. The reality is, like in many other areas that we have already spoken about this morning in questions, that the impact of lower visitor numbers has reflected on the income of the Trust and has put their services under pressure. It is now up to us to, as I say, restructure Jersey Heritage Trust and equally for this Government and these States Members to consider what financial support is appropriate to secure the future of our Island heritage, both now and in the longer-term.