

QUESTION TO BE ASKED OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICES COMMITTEE ON TUESDAY 29th APRIL 2003, BY THE DEPUTY OF ST. JOHN

Question

- (a) In P.119/2000 entitled 'Royal Court House/States Building: approval of drawings,' the three new lifts are stated as being accessible by wheelchairs. Therefore, would the President inform members why the lift located near the Old Library/Royal Court has a step between its access and that of the Court, and what, if anything, the Committee intends to do to rectify this?
- (b) Would the President inform members why there are no tactile warning strips fitted to the top of each flight of steps of the new exterior entrance podium?
- (c) Would the President inform members whether the disabled groups, which were consulted prior to the proposals contained in P.199/2000, have since been invited to test the new facilities, and, if so, what, if any, comments have been made?
- (d) As the States Building is a Site of Special Interest, (S.S.I.), would the President confirm whether any of the windows replaced or refurbished during the project have been altered in any way, and, if so, their location, the nature of the alterations carried out and why such alterations were necessary, and, if this is the case, whether the Committee will be taking steps to rectify the windows to their original design and specification?

Answer

- (a) From the new entrance, all three new lifts are accessible by wheelchair users as stated. However, it is not possible to gain access to all parts of the building from all three lifts. Due to the constraints imposed by the existing multi levelled interior, there are a few areas which cannot be accessed by wheelchair users. The particular area referred to by the Deputy is located between the Old Library and the Royal Court where it was not possible to create a ramp to accommodate the existing single step. Should access be required to the Royal Court by someone in a wheelchair, the lift closer to the States Chamber gives direct access. Similarly, if access is required to the Old Library, the lift from the main public entrance gives direct access. In the possible event of a prisoner being in a wheelchair, assistance would have to be given to negotiate the single step in the corridor between the lift and the Royal Court.

It should also be noted that the existing lift at the Church Street end of the building is not large enough to accommodate a wheelchair.

- (b) The podium steps, extended terraced steps and the parapet walls were all designed to match the detailing of the existing steps and walls. The use of tactile surfaces in paved areas is usually restricted to road crossings as a warning to the visually impaired. It is not customary to use tactile paving associated with granite paving and steps. It is worth noting that the access audit report prepared by the Centre for Accessible Environments made no recommendation for the inclusion of tactile paving at the steps.

Similarly, there was no requirement to comply with the Building Bye Laws (Jersey) Technical Guidance document Part 8 as the work approved was a material alteration to an existing building. Had the 'corduroy' tactile warnings strips been required, it is possible they would have created a tripping hazard and mobility problems for wheelchairs.

- (c) None of the parties who were consulted prior to drafting the proposals contained in P.199/2000 have been invited to test the new facilities as the construction work is not yet complete.
- (d) The approach adopted for dealing with the rotted softwood windows was to replace them with replicas in hardwood. The opportunity was taken to replace the single glazing with thin double glazed units.

Other minor improvements were carried out to a few windows to remove a number of architecturally inconsistent details. The only one altered of concern to the Deputy of St John is located in the first floor Members' Room facing the Royal Square. Unlike any other window on the elevation it had the top two panes of glass sub divided and openable. As the room now has conditioned air, mechanically distributed, the high level window vents were removed and the replacement window made to match the seven other windows immediately to the right of the elevation (Drawing No. 2980:120A).