

5. Questions to Ministers Without Notice - The Minister for Economic Development

The Deputy Bailiff:

That concludes the first question period. We now come to the second question period and I call on the Connétable of St. Mary.

5.1 The Connétable of St. Mary:

Would the Minister advise whether anything can be done to get more or at least more varied and more appealing channels on the local Freeview service, more channels with wider appeal?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean (The Minister for Economic Development):

It is intended that the extent of the channels available on Freeview will expand but clearly this is not a matter that can be resolved in the short-term. However, I accept the point raised by the Constable and we will continue to try to expand that network where possible.

The Deputy Bailiff:

I should have announced for the benefit of the public for those who do not recognise your voice that we are having questions to the Minister for Economic Development. Next question, Deputy Hilton.

5.2 Deputy J.A. Hilton of St. Helier:

Several months ago Members attended a presentation on the Advance to Work Scheme and after that presentation I asked a question about the lack of States departments who were involved in placing youngsters on work experience and the question I want to ask the Minister is what progress has been made on that matter? He did say to me that he would report back to the States Assembly and let us know how many States departments are now actively offering places to young people.

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

There has been some progress in that area I am pleased to say. I cannot give concrete details of the exact numbers across the entire States. We did hear a moment ago from the Minister for Transport and Technical Services who has given his undertaking to take on young, unemployed people and I can say my own Department for Economic Development currently has one very successful Advance to Work in our regulatory services area. I would also add that there have been so far 184 young people who have taken part in Advance to Work that have led to full-time paid employment, which I am delighted with the success of that scheme and the support the private sector is giving. We do need to get more from the public sector.

5.2.1 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Can I just seek an assurance from the Minister that he will contact all States departments to establish exactly what they are doing to further the employment chances of young people?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I probably have not made myself clear. We have certainly been in contact with all departments through the Skills Executive and the Skills Board and made it clear that we do look for States departments and the public sector to play its part in this role. I know also that the Consumer Council has had 5 Advance to Work people so far so there are quite a few organisations within the public sector playing their part, but more is required.

5.3 Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Further to my question of last year, which I am sure the Minister remembers, regarding antisocial behaviour on the Albert Pier, is the Minister aware that this is still going on with youngsters down there, screeching tyres on their cars and motorbikes? So much so that nearby residents,

several who own their apartments, are considering selling. I have no objection to the Assistant Minister answering.

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Sadly the Assistant Minister cannot answer this question. Nevertheless I am aware of an ongoing issue. We have security services employed by the Harbour Department to police the area. I know the States of Jersey Police do what they can but invariably the problem has moved on by the time they arrive. We will continue to do what we can. It is difficult for residents in the area. It is also extremely difficult for those that visit the Island in the Marine Leisure area, which contribute to our economy. We will continue to work at this problem.

5.4 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

The Economic Growth Plan, when is it due and has it been discussed with the Economic Adviser and the Fiscal Policy Panel in view of the global economic climate?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I have a draft of it on my desk here. As a matter of fact it has been circulated for views with various local business organisations and other individuals. An advance copy went to Scrutiny and yes, the matter has been discussed with the other individuals that the Senator just mentioned. I would hope that we will be in a position to progress matters further with this important document very shortly.

5.5 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

The Assistant Minister earlier advised the Assembly that the new air traffic control system is safe and working well. Could the Minister therefore explain to Members why they have restricted the flow of air traffic to the Island at a time when overall traffic levels are almost half of what they were at the peak under the old system?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I think the Deputy is aware that the new P.P.R. (Prior Permission Required) system has been put in place for the purposes of safety. Although he is absolutely right, the numbers have been reduced, the air traffic control service is being as flexible as possible. I am advised that indeed the capacity in this regard has not yet been fully utilised. I do recognise there are issues here and we are working to try and resolve them as quickly as possible. It is, I hasten to add, a temporary measure.

5.5.1 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

A supplementary on that. I was in the U.K. recently and I have been advised by 2 airports how people believe the Jersey airspace is closed to general aviation. They feel that these measures are so restrictive that they are talking about going elsewhere rather than coming to Jersey. Is the Minister aware of this?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

If that is true that is of great concern and I would suggest it is in a large amount due to the public pronouncements that have been made on this subject. The misinformation, I may say, that has been floated in the public domain by a number of different individuals has not helped the situation, certainly has not done any good at all for the reputation of the Island. I would add that we have Class A airspace, which has been mentioned earlier on. One of the downsides of that is that the general aviation community in a wider sphere do have some reservations about coming here. The new website is helping to remove those concerns and attract new business, which I think we will benefit from in the long run.

5.6 Deputy A.E. Jeune:

Would the Minister agree that the current licensing laws are out of date and if so would he say what progress has been made to update this law, which I believe was due to be brought back to the Assembly in 2009, and whether it will increase the off-licence purchase of alcohol age limit to 21, and when this new law would be brought to the Assembly?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

That was a string of questions, I will do my best to address them. I think first of all the Deputy is referring to the liquor licensing laws, she did say licensing, I assume she is talking about the liquor licensing law. There was a Green Paper which has been completed, the Deputy and Members will be aware. I am at this present moment progressing to a White Paper through the department. We hope to be in a position to be able to publish the White Paper towards the end of this year and the intention is it will be drafted in time for next year in order to bring the new liquor licensing law before the States for debate. The actual detail within that I would not want to predetermine at this particular stage. The Deputy has asked a specific question. Clearly there are a whole raft of questions relating to the liquor licensing law and I think this is not the appropriate moment to try delving into each individual case.

5.6.1 Deputy A.E. Jeune:

Is age limit one of the considerations?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

The Deputy would be aware that through the Green Paper age limits were a factor that was included, so the answer is yes.

5.7 The Deputy of St. Mary:

Could the Minister explain to Members why he is bringing the Gambling Law to the States tomorrow or the day after with no public consultation as to the codes and guidelines which would govern online gaming and with no report as to the aspects of gambling which were mentioned in the previous debate? Both of these items were promised previously when we debated gambling before.

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

The Deputy in fact sent me an email just before the sitting asking me the very same question. I think he is in fact conflating 2 issues. The new Gambling Law, which we will be debating at some point this week, is modernising our gambling legislation which dates back to the early 1960s. Indeed by so doing it will allow us to put in place for the purposes of the Gambling Commission a much stronger regime to ensure that we properly regulate our gambling industry, which is not the case at the moment. The issues that the Deputy is conflating are ones of the Code of Practice. Code of Practice relates specifically to the online gaming legislation which is separate, and indeed those will be published and consulted on as soon as they are concluded.

5.8 Deputy J.B. Fox of St. Helier:

In relation to Condor's recent troubles and the requests we have made for having a meeting with Condor to seek improvements, have we had a date yet for a meeting with them? They have managed to speak to BBC Radio Jersey Live, I am hoping they will be able to speak to us live very shortly.

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

First of all I would like to point out, notwithstanding the Deputy's challenges when he was travelling back from St. Malo last night, notwithstanding that, I know that the services have improved in recent weeks and I am very pleased about that. We continue to look for further improvement as we run through the summer. As far as the meeting is concerned that I have promised the Deputy, at the moment very busy schedules, we are spending a lot of time in this

Assembly on important business. We are hoping that the week commencing 25th July is one where the Managing Director will be in the Island and available to meet the Deputies who are interested in so doing.

5.9 Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

I wonder if the Minister can give the Chamber an update on the possible merger between Jersey Business Venture and Jersey Enterprise?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Yes, I can. In fact discussions between the department and the board of Jersey Business Venture have been very constructive to date. I believe that we will hopefully be in a position for the merger to be in place by the beginning of 2012 so that the new organisation, an organisation delivering enterprise and business support to the largely S.M.E.s (Small and Medium Enterprises) will be functioning by the beginning of the first quarter of 2012 and I think that is something all members would be very supportive of.

5.9.1 Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

Supplementary. Will this mean vacating the current premises of Jersey Business Venture and all going to where Jersey Enterprise is located?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

The Deputy asks a very relevant question. In fact that is the basis of some considerable discussion. The simple answer is yes, there will be consolidation into one premises. There is still ongoing discussion as to which premises that will be but they will merge into one location.

5.10 The Deputy of St. John:

During the whaling conference the Minister spoke to 89 delegates from around the world who attended that conference, and given the nature of the conference does the Minister consider that this is good business for the Island and what are the Minister's views on whaling and what research did the Minister undertake on the views of the local community on whaling before speaking at that conference? As security guards were also used at the Hotel de France what police checks, if any, were undertaken ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

That is too many questions.

The Deputy of St. John:

[Aside] Of course I am on a fishing expedition.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Minister, if you can remember those questions please answer them.

The Deputy of St. John:

I have a number of extras to add, Sir.

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I think I heard a very relevant comment from behind me that the Deputy is on a bit of a fishing expedition with this one. Nevertheless, he asked some important questions. I understand the sensitivities with regard to the whaling conference that was undertaken in the Island and it was in some respects a decision that I was reluctant with. Nevertheless in this current economic climate we have to balance the pros and the cons. Certainly as far as our conferencing industry is concerned the business was extremely valuable and well-needed as far as the Island is concerned. We did consider all the ramifications. Nevertheless the conference itself is one that seeks to

bring together parties with opposing views. This type of forums are in many respects constructive. I believe that the conference itself was relatively constructive for those that participated in it and that it will not be detrimental to the Island. I believe that indeed we can be seen in a positive light and take a similar view to the U.K. The U.K. policy is ... and the Deputy asked me my own personal view on whaling, I do not agree with whaling and I follow, as does the department, the policy of the U.K. where we do not support that.

The Deputy of St. John:

Supplementary please, Sir.

The Deputy Bailiff:

No, because you had 5 questions in the last one.

The Deputy of St. John:

Oh, cut me off at the knees again.

The Deputy Bailiff:

I will add you to the list.

5.11 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

Will the Minister join with me in congratulating the Minister for Transport and Technical Services in his programme for apprenticeships and will he also undertake to look to his department to see if he cannot also include apprenticeship schemes for the Harbours and Airports?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I have already congratulated the Minister for Transport and Technical Services for his involvement in the apprenticeship scheme. I have also suggested or confirmed to Members that Economic Development also takes on apprentices and indeed across the States we would like to see very many more. It is a very good scheme, it is working, it is getting young people into jobs and that is really important.

5.12 The Deputy of St. Martin:

The Minister has kindly invited Members to visit the new air control tower. Would the Minister have any objection to Members bringing a friend who may be able to ask much more pertinent and searching questions that some States Members, including myself?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

It would depend who the Member's friend was.

[17:15]

5.13 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Returning to whaling, does the Minister agree and could he explain why it was left to him instead of the Minister for Planning and Environment to go to that conference and if the Deputy of St. John was really concerned about it does he agree with me that perhaps the best thing to put the Deputy's mind at rest was just to tell him to stay out of the water for a few days.

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I support all areas of the local economy. I open many conferences and this, as far as I was concerned, was business as usual. I provided a welcome to delegates and it was as simple as that. It was a welcome to the conference and I wished them success within their discussions on this important matter.

5.14 Connétable D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence:

Given the current levels of unemployment will the Minister acknowledge that any redundancies that may be caused by this House accepting the Sunday Trading Regulations unamended would be an unintended consequence from his department?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I think the Constable is asking for support for her amendment. Clearly Members would not wish to see any unintended consequences of any action taken by this Assembly and I am sure Members will weigh up very carefully when they consider the amendment of the Constable of St. Lawrence, if indeed there is going to be any impact from not supporting or for that matter for supporting her particular amendment. We do not want to see any jobs lost in this economy. We are working hard to create job opportunities.