

STATES OF JERSEY

Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel Fort Regent

WEDNESDAY, 27th MAY 2009

Panel:

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

Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier (Vice-Chairman)

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade

Connétable G.F. Butcher of St. John

Mr. I. Barclay (Panel Adviser)

Witnesses:

Mrs. C. Penfold (President and Administrator, Jersey Swimming Club)

Mrs. J. Nelson (President, Jersey Netball Association)

Ms. Y. Sheldon (Senior Vice President, Jersey Netball Association)

Present:

Mrs. E. Liddiard (Scrutiny Officer)

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

I would like to welcome you to this session of the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel. We are looking at obviously the future of Fort Regent and we will introduce ourselves. My name is Roy Le Hérissier, I am chairman of the panel, Deputy of St. Saviour.

Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier:

Deputy Trevor Pitman, St. Helier and Vice-Chair.

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

Deputy Montfort Tadier of St. Brelade.

Mr. I. Barclay (Panel Adviser):

Ian Barclay, sports and leisure consultant who are advising the panel.

Mrs. C. Penfold (President and Administrator, Jersey Swimming Club):

Carole Penfold, I am the administrator for Jersey Swimming Club. I am also the club president.

Mrs. J. Nelson (President, Jersey Netball Association):

Jackie Nelson, President of the Netball Association.

Ms. Y. Sheldon (Senior Vice President, Jersey Netball Association):

Yveline Sheldon, Senior Vice-President of the Jersey Netball Association.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Liz Liddiard who is our officer and Linda who is looking after the recording. We do not administer a formal oath here but obviously we operate on the assumption that you are abiding by the oath, and your evidence is, in that sense, protected. I should add, we are largely focused on the work of your sports groups but we might ask you one or 2 broader questions about the Fort because we obviously know you are here to represent the interests of the group, but we would be keen to hear your broader issues, because obviously we have got to struggle with the broader issues of the Fort and its future. I will kick off with the first question. As we know the Jersey Swimming Club is provided with an office at Fort Regent. I wonder if we could be told how this benefits the club and does it provide an accessible point for members of the public?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

Well, in the modern day now with computers, et cetera, nobody realises how much paperwork is still involved, and with swimming there is a lot of paperwork. Therefore we certainly needed a base, we needed an office somewhere. We were lucky enough to have an office up in the old swimming pool building for a while, which was rather nice because I could look out the window and see the tide coming in at West Park. But at that point we were also running the Pool View Café(?), so it was quite busy.

That was wonderful because whenever we had a competition it meant that we could take all the stuff that was kept in my office in the cupboard down poolside, down a couple of flights of stairs. Now, we have the problem where, yes, we do need a base but the majority of the equipment that we have ... I have got stuff in my garage at home, I have stuff under my stairs, I have stuff in the office, so if we have competitions running which are run at Les Quennevais these days my husband is very handy with his car luckily and he does an awful lot of lifting and shifting. He quite often has to come up to the Fort, we have got a trolley, to take stuff out of my office to take to his car to collect the stuff that is at home to drive it out to Les Quennevais. It would be nice to have an office that was central to a swimming pool rather than in the Fort where there is not a pool anymore. The other thing I have found is quite often people do come up and because we have got Jersey Swimming Club on the window they are inclined to tap and say: "Where is the swimming pool?" I have to say: "It is up on the hill and it is closed down but the nearest one is the AquaSplash." It is not quite the same.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Do you pay a rent to the Fort?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

Yes, we do. It is not a vast rent, it is a very good rent. But, yes, we do pay a rent.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Does the swimming community in Jersey have a development officer?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

No.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

You did not follow that model?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

No. No, that has never happened.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Then I will move you to my colleague; we all know of course, and you have obviously referred to it, we all know the turbulent history of the swimming pool location in the last few years. Was your club involved in consultation to any extent?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

Yes, I have a large file in my office with all the particulars, all the papers, all the consultations that took place. We did stand outside the States offices with the Jersey Swimming Club banner to try to lobby our people when they were coming in. I think a lot of them saw us and came in the back way. **[Laughter]** They actually avoided us: “No, we are not going there” and came through the back door.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

One last question. I mean, we know there are other clubs as well, like Regent and so forth. When it comes to issues like Les Quennevais and AquaSplash and so forth, do you operate with one voice? Do you get together and sort of say: “This is how we are going to ...”

Mrs. C. Penfold:

There is a liaison with the clubs. The difference is that Tigers use Haute Vallée for all their training. They do everything out of Haute Vallée, where with us we have a small session on the Monday at Les Quennevais in the small pool for levels one to 4; that is the small children. We are also at Langford and we are also at the AquaSplash, so it is very diverse. We are in 3 different places. On a Monday we are in 3 different venues. It was so much easier when we just had the one place. The difference is as well that with the Fort Regent pool we had the small pool where small children could walk in to the water because small children do like to be able to walk in. They feel safer if they are walking in. With Langford we are a metre deep at the shallow end so they are ... we have taught them to sit and swivel

into the water. You will always get the odd child that is frightened. We do cure them of the fear of deep water but it does make life difficult, where with the set-up at Fort Regent we had the small pool where we could run the lower levels. Then they moved up to the bit behind the boom, and then they moved up to the bit the other side of the boom, and we had the diving going as well. Now we have got no diving. That is the big part of Jersey Swimming Club history that is redundant at the moment. We have not got a level one diving tutor on the Island so we cannot teach diving. I have trophies in my house and I have trophies in my office that are not going to be given to people at the end of the year because we cannot do diving anymore. That is the sad demise of the loss of Fort Regent.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Yes, absolutely. We are going to broaden out, we are going to bring netball and swimming together and I will move to Trevor.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Obviously we are not focusing just on the swimming. Is there much collaboration between the sports associations who are based up at the Fort?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Can I bring your question and what we were talking about just before? We are very fortunate in having an office up at the Fort for our netball development officer. Right now we have an administrator in, as I heard you say that you were an administrator, but we share the offices with hockey, cricket have just moved out, but athletics, football and triathlon, I think have just come into the offices, and table tennis was there for a while. That is a superb setup because we definitely do liaise together as different sports, especially when you have got very talented youngsters who are good at cricket, good at hockey and good at netball, and it does happen. We have got one girl in particular who is doing extremely well at cricket but would be a fantastic netballer. The great thing is you do discuss these youngsters and between you make sure that they are not on overload. So, it is good to have that office where you all speak about things and try to mix in with each other.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Is that an office setup which is big and open enough to attract the public as a focal point?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

No, definitely not. We do not have a window. We never know what the weather is like outside. But having said that, it is superb to have that central point for us, definitely.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

But as far as promoting the activity, I mean, obviously you work away from your windowless office but drawing the public in there is no link in that way. They cannot see you. They do not know you are there, that is what I am getting at.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

It is something that we would definitely work at. As far as attracting the public, probably things would have to change slightly because you do not want netballers coming in talking to our netball development officer and maybe disturbing the rugby and the football, and what have you. But I think it is something we could definitely work on, yes.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

There is much talk of the centre of sporting excellence, how would you see that developing? If you had a magic wand, how could we help that be pushed forward?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

I think it would need to come from us because whereas we have only used it as an office to do the official paperwork, we could, by use of posters and ... get people to come in, attract them in. Because people that go up there, apart from the mums that go on the play ... well, the children go on the play area, the play zone, there are people going up there to use the facilities at the gym, and therefore might

be very interested in trying a different sport.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

That is not done at the moment?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Definitely not. No, they are not attracted into the office but it is an interesting thing to think of, yes, to work on.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

The next question relates to the relationship and interaction between the various clubs and the Fort Regent management, so I was wondering if you could tell us how the management at Fort Regent communicates with clubs and associations to provide information and receive feedback. That is open to anyone.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

You do not really use the Fort right now, do you?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

David Bisson and the others in the office are always open for anything. I only have got to go up and I can see him at any time.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Definitely.

Mrs. C. Penfold:

That is always very helpful. I do not particularly like the open ... they have got an open box thing in the office upstairs where the mail goes. I very rarely go up there to pick up my mail because I feel it is more

secure at the P.O. (Post Office) box, which I empty every morning on the way to work. But to speak to somebody up there, they are always open and they will pop in and say hello. I have got no problem at all there. They are very helpful.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

The events we have up there we have found the staff to be so friendly and they bend over backwards to make sure ... we have got very high standards where our events are concerned. I mean their initial reaction is: "Oh my goodness, they have arrived" because they know we will want every single thing covered. Nothing is too much trouble. I agree with you as far as ... that is the workers. As far as the top management are concerned, they are available at any time. They want the business. They want the Fort to work and they will bend over backwards. If a weekend that we want is not available they will try to find us a weekend for the event that we want to put on. I would say they are superb.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Would you say there is a lot of interaction or on a daily basis is it a fairly less, say, they will leave you be but if you need to contact them and vice versa, then that will happen?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Just with us.

Mrs. C. Penfold:

Yes, the same.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

We make the initial getting in touch with them and saying: "Right, would love to stage this event, can only do it at the Fort [which I will go on to afterwards] therefore can you accommodate us?"

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I am thinking from a public point of view; is there any confusion as to who the point of contact is? So if people phone up and want to make an inquiry either about swimming, netball or another sport, specifically in a more professional capacity than just turning up and doing it, would they be directed to you in the first instance or to someone on the front desk at Fort Regent?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

I think that if somebody ... well, I do not know. As far as I would be aware, I would think that people on the front desk would probably mention that Tigers also have an office up at the Fort. Telephone wise, they used to be able to say: "Right, yes, I will put you through to Jersey Swimming Club", now they cannot do that because we have got an outside line. We have got our own line so that inter-contact we do not have anymore on the phone. I would hope that they would mention that we are there. I have to say my window, by the way, is on the inside of the building so I do not know what the weather is like either. **[Laughter]** At one stage they were talking of putting blue plastic on the window so that they all matched up and I went out and told them no, and the man said: "Well, we have been contracted to do this, we have to cover your window." And I said: "Over my dead body. I will stand there if I have to." I had to go up and see management to say I am not having that on my window. So what I try to do to attract is we have got trophies and things that are to do with Jersey Swimming Club in the window for people passing; the blind is up everyday and they can see what is there, and I am hoping that attracts them in.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Are you all disconnected from the internal phone system? Do you run your own telephone line or are you connected to the internal system?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

The internal, yes.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

You are, unlike Mrs. Penfold?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Are you a 449?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

No, we are not. We were connected to their system but then when it all changed and you have got this new all over States system, they asked us to get our own line so we then got our own line. So we are not connected to them at all.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Yet the development officers, they are?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Yes, definitely. I would say that the majority of our new people come through our website. But having said that, the amount of years we have used the Fort practically all the staff know us by first name, they probably know our telephone numbers as well, and they know that we would be only too pleased to receive a telephone call from anyone interested in getting involved in our sport, so would not hesitate in putting them through to us.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

You are listed in the phone book as well presumably?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

I think it would probably come from the website as well. But the ... no, we are not ... the development office ... there are a lot of good points here today. Yes, I like that idea. That is something to think about.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Yes, that is a good point. Because we have had a lot of discussion about the Fort's website and the impossibility currently of booking to attend concerts and the fact their website is on the overall States website, and is that a good or a bad thing.

Mrs. C. Penfold:

It should probably be separate. I mean I have never looked up their website.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

I have not either.

Deputy M. Tadier:

People do not tend to think of the States website as being something like Fort Regent or specific things. It can be difficult to get access via that, but we are quite limited as well; Fort Regent is quite limited because it is a public body. At the moment I do not think it can have its own website, just to give you some background.

Mrs. C. Penfold:

I know our ... Jersey Swimming Club have got their own website and that is ... people are contacting that worldwide now. We are now international because I have recently had somebody come through from South Africa, and at Christmas I had somebody from Australia. This is people where their parents were members of Jersey Swimming Club. The one in Australia, his mum was 92 and still swimming but remembered Jersey Swimming Club. Because it is on email you do not know where these people are based so I wrote back and said: "Send me where your address is and I will post you one of our books of photographs for 140 years" and that cost me £10 because he lived in Australia. **[Laughter]** I did not learn from that one because the recent one is South Africa, and then I have got somebody coming over on holiday in July who is going to bring over photos of his father and medals that the father had won. Any memorabilia is Jersey history. That is because of our website. I do not think they would have

thought to go on to a States website to find that.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

No, good point.

Mrs. C. Penfold:

It is very important to have that website contact.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

We revert to Mrs. Penfold again. You mention in a more general sense in your submission that there is a lack of facilities for young people at the Fort and they were taken away. What could you see being introduced that would be popular?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

Well, I know out the back that there is a sort of fenced in court. I mean that would be nice to see that, with somebody in charge of it, open for children just to kick a ball around. I mean, most of your children still, in this day and age, if they are not skateboarding they want to kick a ball around. Other facilities like that. The play area inside is very popular. I think it is a chance for mums to sit and have a break while the children are playing in that play area. But once you come out of that age of those little ones there just is not anything at all and children get bored very easily. So, it is difficult to say exactly what specific changes, as the children grow they change what they want and at the moment skateboarding is one of the main things. Well, I would not see you putting anything to do with skateboarding up there because you have just done this facility down at the harbour, which is great. They have got somewhere to go. I do not think you can do anything with a larger area but it is a case of finding out what is available. You do not want to bring children up and then have them sitting in front of the T.V. (television) screens or silly games. You want them to be exercising. I know they set up a gym for younger children supervised, maybe that is something that could be expanded on a little bit. You have got the tiny tots doing their gymnastics to music. Okay, that caters for that younger age

group, maybe you could do something for the next age group up. You have got to attract the children. I think you have got to ask the children what it is that they want to do as well, because adults telling children what to do is not ... I think from the discipline point of view, adults have to tell children what to do and lead them in the right area, but I think anything to do with actual things that are going to stop children becoming bored, you have to get the children's input. So maybe contacting the schools and getting schools to do surveys to find out what children would like to find at the Fort. I get fed up with hearing people saying how wonderful it was years ago. They remember in their youth going up there and there was all those things going on but now there is nothing. It is very easy for young people to say: "I am bored."

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Is it a failing on one hand then that all the sports up there really are supervised; would it attract young people?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

No, I think you have got to have supervised sports otherwise it is dangerous. I think that is essential. You have got some super people up there. They are well qualified to supervise whatever is going on. I think you just have to find that medium. You have to also get parents to realise that children need to be kept fit and healthy. I know, probably with netballers, with swimming you will very, very rarely find a swimmer that will take drugs or indulge in too much alcohol. They all go through a stage where they find: "I am 18 and I can legally drink" and they will go and try it, but if they are training at whatever sport it does put them off going down those avenues. I think we have to educate parents that we want their children to be fit because of future health.

Deputy M. Tadier:

There certainly used to be an outside self-contained multi-sports area that you could play basketball, football and all sorts of ... probably handball as well, which was opposite the old Quasar site, but I think they have taken that away, have they not?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

There is still a fenced-off area out there but it is very rarely anybody is in it.

Deputy M. Tadier:

The question I was going to ask, and it is slightly perhaps more philosophical, but it seems to us as a panel that there has maybe been a tension between an open use of Fort Regent as it perhaps was in the past and a move towards a more *centre d'excellence* if I can call it that, where sports are promoted individually perhaps but at the cost of a more open facility where people can just come in and do those sports and other amusements like we did in the past. Do you see that as an issue or is that the correct analysis and can anything be done to perhaps amalgamate the 2 usages?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

I feel that the activities that are in the Fort right now are very structured, in that it is like an association, like the J.N.A. (Jersey Netball Association), that provides classes, therefore it is the parents that can afford it that their children participate. I do not know if any of you watched Britain's Got Talent last night ... sorry.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Amazingly, not.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

There was a fantastic group of dancers, they were from Liverpool and you could tell that ... they were like urban street dancers.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

They were dressed in army uniforms, were they?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

They were dressed in ... they had graffiti all over their faces and over their clothes and it was for change, and it was against knives. They had a real sort of reason behind their dance. You just sensed their passion in this street ... and the energy that they put and enthusiasm they put into this dance, and you could see it meant so much to them. But you could also see the discipline and the unity between them which was superb, and the great thing was even though they did not win that semi final they came away saying: "It was well worth it because of what we got out of it." I would like to see something where children off the street who did not have money could come and participate in something up at the Fort. We do provide classes, we also provide places in the classes for families that cannot afford it, but of course you do not advertise that otherwise all places would be taken and we need the money to help with our funding. But if children knew that there was something that they could just go to and let off steam and use their energy that they have got, it would be fantastic.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Two or 3 years back, there seemed to be a mood that young people were not wanted at the Fort unless they were doing an activity, and there was even talk about them employing a professional youth worker up there. Is that something you guys were consulted about?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

I would think that ... taking a few years ago I saw the change in children generally and behaviour and the fact that they suddenly had no respect for anybody that was older than them, and the guys up at the Fort had a really hard time with unruly youths coming in and just causing trouble. So I would think that on those grounds alone, having been told by kids: "You cannot touch me. You touch me and I am going to sue you for assault" then the Fort would start saying to children: "Right, we do not want you here unless you are taking part in activities" and I think that probably is a great fault up there. It should be open to younger people and the idea of the dance ... I mean they have had that on 3 nights on the Britain talent thing.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Do you watch it?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

Yes. **[Laughter]** I watched one this week and I have got the rest taped because I have had a busy week, but that way you can zip through and see the ones that are worth watching. But there does seem to be these dance troupes on each of the nights. That is a lot of effort those people are putting in. Because the kids themselves have got together and decided this is what they want to do, that they are working so hard to produce what they are actually producing. If you can find a big area at the Fort and open that for kids then I am sure you would get a lot of children up there. I am sure it is the discipline thing. You need children to be controlled and they need to have respect for people. I know it was a problem with the guys because I saw it.

Deputy M. Tadier:

So reading between the lines, are you suggesting we need a Jersey's Got Talent perhaps?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

There is an idea for you. I mean there is talent out there. I maintain that where people joke at watching these programmes, if you only find one person with talent out of the whole thing you have done that one person a favour because that could be a loss of talent that people are not going to see. Yes, something like that.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Good, well, it is Mrs. Penfold again, she gets another starring role.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

I get hit later. **[Laughter]**

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Yes, we will come back to the swimming club.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

How does the club currently operate and where does it train and hold competitions. You have already touched on this but maybe if you could just ... for the tape.

Mrs. C. Penfold:

We operate with immense caution these days. We do find that pool hire charges are absolutely horrendous. They take a lot of money. It is about £46,000 a year we pay now in pool charges. We have got to find just under £3,000 a month every month for 12 months of the year for the use of Langford, an hour a week at Les Quennevais is thrown in there, and then on top of that we have got £3,000 a term for the AquaSplash. So, we are finding it very difficult to keep our heads above water. Jersey Swimming Club was set up to stop people drowning back in the 1800s and we like to think we are still there to teach people to swim. We are going to keep it going, we think we are there to pass it on to the next generation and so on. We are not there to kill it off. But we do struggle financially. This is why we have to charge parents to bring the children swimming because we have to meet those costs plus as well as paying our teachers and our coaches. We train now, we have got an hour a week at Les Quennevais in the small pool on a Monday. We train at Langford every night of the week. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday nights, we have got our squads up there from 6.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m. On a Monday from 4.30 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. we have got Learn to Swim. On Tuesday from 4.30 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. we have got our development squads in there. On Wednesday from 4.30 p.m. to 9.00 p.m. we are there with Learn to Swim. We do adults between 8.00 p.m. and 9.00 p.m. It is the only time we can fit them in. Then on a Thursday it is the development squad, 4.30 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. and then the senior squads. Friday night we are down at the AquaSplash. Monday night we are at the AquaSplash between 7.00 p.m. and 8.00 p.m. We are pretty busy. We also have 2 early mornings a week where the seniors will train. They train Monday and Thursday mornings and they are up there at 5.30 a.m. in the morning before they go to school. We are basically all over the place.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Second part of the question: how does the fact that the club does not have designated access to the swimming pool and a swimming pool with the necessary specifications for competition affect you?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

Well, it means that we have to use Les Quennevais for competitions. It is going to get worse in the future. In the future what they are planning on, the A.S.A. (Amateur Swimming Association) is that swimmers going to internationals will have to qualify in a 50 metre pool. We do not have a 50 metre pool. Our closest 50 metre pool is in France. Or we have got the expense of going to England. Now, from what I was told recently, Crystal Palace pool is now closed down because they find asbestos in the building and they are not planning to reopen it. The one they are building for the Olympics will be open for the Olympics and then they are closing it so that the area around, which is going to be residential ... it is going to turn out to be residential, so until they have got established they plan to reopen the London Centre of Swimming Excellence in ... about 5 years after the Olympics. So that pool will sit empty for 5 years until they decide to officially open it. We have got problems trying to get our children qualified for Nationals. It is bad enough now. In Jersey we cannot hold competitions down at the AquaSplash. We have told them we would love to hold competitions at the AquaSplash, but you have to have electronic equipment, for one. Secondly, the AquaSplash bill, because of the money that they would lose if they closed the pool, they would have to keep the leisure pool open while we were running the competition. Now, I referee swimming. I have visions of you blow 3 blows of the whistle to get the swimmers ready and one to get them up on the blocks. At that point little Johnny and his dad who are standing on top of the flumes are going to have to stand to attention and keep quiet because we need complete silence for the start of the competition. They cannot do that, so therefore we cannot hold competitions down at the AquaSplash which puts a lot of pressure on Les Quennevais. It is the only place we can go.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

When the AquaSplash came along, were you given the impression you could hold competitions there?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

They were going to replace Fort Regent. We were told that what they built down at the AquaSplash was going to replace Fort Regent. It does not replace Fort Regent. Also, the setup they have got down there with the diving boards, if you are an official watching the strokes you have to be able to walk up and down the pool. You cannot walk up and down the pool on one side because the diving board is in the way. So, you would literally, if you are watching the swimmers, you could end up hurting yourself by walking straight into a rather heavy piece of equipment. So, you can get stuck. So, no it is not what we want.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

You say there is no electronic equipment. Were you promised there would be electronic equipment there?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

No, we were just promised that it was going to be like Fort Regent.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Look into it?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

Yes. But, no, the electronics that Les Quennevais have had to replace over the last couple of years, it is now essential on competitions if you are going to licence your swimming competitions you have to have electronic equipment. So, if we could get electronics down at the AquaSplash and we could get a system where they had to close the whole pool while we were using it - because you also need a warm-down area - so that they could use the wave pool area as a warm-down area, then we would hold competitions. We would struggle. We would have to get extra officials on that bit of pool that you

could not see, but there probably is not enough seating down there anyway. It is extremely hot down there and our parents on a Monday and a Friday night are really hot sitting upstairs watching the children swim.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

A final point and I will then pass on to Deputy Tadier and it is probably a naïve question, but do you think the change to the pool at ... do you feel misled and do you think it was a well thought through process?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

We were extremely angry. We do feel we were misled, yes. It is like everything in life. If you are going to build a new swimming pool you should be asking the people that are involved in swimming what they need. If you are going to build netball courts you should be asking the people involved in netball. It does not happen that way and it seems to me that they just do not ask the right people the right questions. We are the ones that are seeing the children and swimming is an excellent sport. It builds stamina for all the other sports and I can understand what you are saying about kids being talented. We have had swimmers that have had to give up swimming because they were good at netball and they have had to choose netball. Josie Brown, she was an excellent swimmer. You have got to be able to maintain; you have got to be able to give children the chance to train and in order to train they have got to have the facilities.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay, thank you; to netball.

Deputy M. Tadier:

The next question is about netball. So, what is involved in organising a netball tournament up at Fort Regent and how much space is needed to do this?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

This was the reason that I felt compelled to write a letter because if we, as a netball association, lost the Fort we would not be able to hold half the events that we do hold because it is the only venue in Jersey that has 2 netball courts. It has 3 netball courts if you take into account Queens Hall as well and there is nowhere else, and especially with the viewing, that the Fort is just superb for our top events. We have a Jersey Open which is held usually end of February and that attracts 14 clubs from England. That is the maximum amount that we can take and then we have 6 that participate from Jersey, so the Jersey players get to have that top competition. We get clubs saying: "Can I pay the deposit now for next year to secure our place in your tournament?" because it is such a top class tournament; they want to be involved. You see clubs walking up the tunnel at the entrance of the Fort and they just go: "This is amazing" and they have not even got to the courts yet and then they go into the Queens Hall and they say: "I have never seen anything like this." It is the whole atmosphere. It is just sort of - "regal" is not the word - but it is just a superb venue, it really is, for our top games. So, whereas we have tried to get teams across to England to participate in leagues in England, our association is not big enough; we cannot afford it. It cost us about £14,000, not last year, the year before, to enter a senior team into the English league. We cannot sustain that, so we decided that the way forward from now on is to attract clubs to Jersey and last year we had a fantastic weekend where we brought 68 people over from Cheshire and we just had a whole weekend of netball playing the Jersey teams from under 14, right up to over 35. So, we have decided the way forward is to bring the competition to Jersey in whatever age. We are going into mixed netball as well and we want to get the men's England netball team over, but we cannot do this without the Fort; we just cannot. So, it would be absolutely dreadful for us to lose the courts at Fort.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Do you ever use Les Quennevais at all; I know there are some outdoor courts there, but is that ...?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

We use Les Quennevais for our winter league.

Deputy M. Tadier:

For practice?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

No, our winter league. All of our club competitive games are outside when the weather allows it because if it is raining, if there is snow, if there are very high winds, ice we had, we cannot play. All the games have to be rearranged. You just have to look at the articles in the *J.E.P. (Jersey Evening Post)* to say: "Rain hits netball again."

Deputy M. Tadier:

It may sound like a slightly strange question, but why do you use the outdoor courts in the winter rather than in the summer?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Netball has always been a winter sport.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Really?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Yes, and we are not allowed to use the Les Quennevais courts in the summer because it is put over to tennis and that is the only floodlit courts in Jersey where there are 4 floodlit courts. At Haute Vallée School they have got 5, but they are not floodlit. Oakfield have got 4, but they are not floodlit, so we cannot play ... yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

On the broader question of tournaments - and I am following on from what you said about the very

successful netball tournaments that have been hosted at Fort Regent - one of the suggested uses for the new swimming pool area, as you may be aware, is that it be turned into some kind of cheap hotel so that visiting sports teams could be accommodated there. What would you think about that idea?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

A bit further down there was a question about the location of the Fort. Well, one of the brilliant things for us is - take Cheshire, for example, when we brought the 68 people across - the fact that they were in a hotel in town, they had the shopping; they were not far from the Fort. So, the actual transport was brilliant; it was just a stone's throw. So, the venue, rather than it being in Les Quennevais, it would have cost us so much more to ferry the competitors backwards and forwards. The Fort is absolutely brilliant. You have even got the case where if they did not have a game for say one and a half hours they can whip down, do a bit of shopping and come back up again if they want to. No, it is superb and yes, I did see that about the hotel and I thought: "We could use that, yes."

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Good. In a way we have covered some of the next questions, Mrs. Nelson, and it is wonderful to hear your enthusiasm for the Fort. We will have to appoint you as a Fort promotion officer, obviously.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

I can do it as a mum as well because I have got 3 girls and when my children were younger we used the Fort again and again and they just loved it up here.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Yes, excellent. Are there - at the risk of sounding slightly negative - any issues in your Association's use of the Fort? Is there anything you might say: "If only we could improve this it would be that bit better for us."

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Well, it is not too bad. We are not really let down, are we? We intend to get a netball development officer this year and we have just got so much queuing up. Because netball has really taken off in England with the super league, the fact that Jersey has got an England player in Serena Guthrie, and the fact that it is now becoming a men's sport as well, the interest has shot through the roof and we have got so many exciting plans of bringing teams to Jersey. They think it is a fantastic venue. It just offers so much. We have got a superb photo that Cheshire sent us of the Cheshire girls down at First Tower at West Park, Elizabeth Castle in the background, them in their netball kit and they had just gone straight in the water as their cool-down or warm-down, whatever you call it, because the icy water is the finest thing you can possibly do having done a whole day of netball; brilliant, brilliant photo. It sort of had the beaches and the historic Elizabeth Castle in the background and the aspect of bringing sport to Jersey. It was superb. The great thing is, you see, that whereas the competitions that we would be involved with in England, we can only really use Exeter and Southampton which are usually taken up by rugby. They pre-book, so we do not get any of the cheap flights. But where Jersey is concerned we can have anyone from anywhere because you just need an airport and you are here, which is great.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

What about - given the excellent work you are doing - are you able to sort of expand it by working with tourism, for example?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

I do anyhow. As soon as I knew that Cheshire were coming over, they were 40 players of under 18 and under 16 age group and so I went straight down to tourism and I said: "Look, these girls are coming over. They can be your future holidaymakers because they are only going to have a little taster of Jersey and they are going to come over and see the Island. They are just going to have a little taster. If you can put together some sort of little package ..." and they did; it was fantastic. It was the cycle walks; it was every aspect of Jersey you could imagine and they were thrilled with it and we handed it out to each of the people that came across. So, I work with tourism because I love holidaymakers and I love my Island; with a name like "Le Goober(?)" as my maiden name.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can I just push on the issue of the usage for the swimming pool area in the context of presumably both of you have to book when teams come over and I presume that you help to a certain extent in the search for accommodation. But do you ever have any trouble at present finding suitable accommodation for visiting teams?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

We are very lucky because one of our netballers works in the background in the administration of a hotel group, so she is extremely helpful.

Ms. Y. Sheldon:

Also out of season, so ...

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Yes, big thing. Because the majority of our netball is done in winter, hotels will bend over backwards to have a group of 68 coming in February.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

But do you find the rates and everything, you can handle them?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

You have got to barter. You have got to hunt them down and you can.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Yes. Mrs. Penfold, do you have any experience?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

Unfortunately because the only pool we can do competitions at is Les Quennevais and because we are very limited to how many times a year we can book Les Quennevais, we cannot invite swimmers to come over to take part in competitions, so we do not have that difficulty. Sometimes we get a referee in from England and we have to put the referee up in a hotel, but other than that we do not have teams. In years past, the Jersey Swimming Club used to go on an Easter tour. They used to go to Blandford Forum and all around the southwest and then come the summer those teams would come over to Jersey and we would have a 4-way competition up at Fort Regent. But the parents would host. Now, in this day and age you have got this child protection, et cetera, et cetera. Everybody has got to be C.R.B. (Criminal Records Bureau) checked. Anybody in a house that is 16 and over has to be C.R.B. checked and by the time you have gone through all that it is difficult to get parents to want to put their teenage children through that in order for them to host. It just proves its point, to come from Guernsey we have now had to change our sprint meet competition in June to a one day event because they do not want the expense of staying over. They do not want the hosting done, so we have had to make it a one day competition. But we have got difficulties. It would be nice to see a lot more swimmers coming into the Island. We have got the AIB Tigers doing an open competition in October where they try to get swimmers in from all over. I can remember when swimmers used to come over from Europe. You do not see so many these days. I think the expense of coming into the Island and the expense of the hotels, et cetera, is probably prohibited to teams.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Is it fair to also say that for both of you the sports are both limited by the access you can get to the facilities you need; if you had more gaps? So, leading on from that, do you think the Government take development of sport seriously - especially as one of you has mentioned earlier about the health benefits which you know is that we are all meant to be more aware these days - do you think they take it seriously?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

I do not think it is taken seriously enough. My general opinion is - and I have been around swimming

for an awful long time- we have never had a States Member that has had families involved in swimming and therefore there has been no interest from anybody within the States. You have had States Members that have played golf, that have lived near golf courses and have made sure we have got plenty of golf courses. I have got nothing against golf; brilliant sport.

Deputy M. Tadier:

For the record. **[Laughter]**

Mrs. C. Penfold:

I was listening to Tommy Horton doing a speech down at ... we had a breakfast to raise money for the swimmers going to the Island games and absolutely brilliant, but I think the tendency is sport used to be a sport for the rich and so therefore you build more golf courses, et cetera. I used to work for Martin Dodd and Partners who did the extensions at La Moye Golf Club all those years ago, so I did see where money went into sport. With netball you can use the courts and you can change the courts to be used for something else. With a swimming pool you cannot, not unless you have got one with a top that you can turn it into an ice skating rink which again is extremely expensive. I think we have a difficulty in swimming because it does cost to build a swimming pool; it does cost to run a swimming pool and I know the majority of places in the U.K. they do not make money out of running a swimming pool. Their councils have to look after them. But they are in the U.K. promoting that if you are 60 and over you can go in and swim for free. Now, that is looking after the health of people of 60 and over. We have not got anything like that here because we are limited to the amount of ... there are only so many people you can put in a swimming pool at any one time.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

You mentioned that one of the constraints ... we have had the model of netball where they do seem to be thriving obviously with incoming teams - they have really developed that - whereas you have had to, in a sense, you have regressed. You have had to cut back; you have had to make the Guernsey visit into a day only and so on and so forth. When AquaSplash was built and when Les Quennevais use was

negotiated, was there any talk of you would have a certain percentage of time; was it fixed for competitive swimming?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

No.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

So, you have had to negotiate this year by year?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

We have had to negotiate, yes. We would like to do another open competition. In Guernsey there is a Masters competition which is extremely popular. We are looking to try and bring Masters swimming into Jersey swimming clubs from September because if you are going to do the job you have got to do it properly. We have a lot of people out there who are keen to train as Masters and that is something we could open up. If we could have a Masters competition in Jersey we could liaise with Guernsey and they would be more than happy to not have to run it every year, but maybe to do alternate years. That would bring tourism into the Island, but there again, yes, you do need a hotel to put them up. So, if we cannot have a 50 metre pool up on Fort Regent - which I think we should have had in the first place - then a cheap hotel would be fine, but anything other than that I am sorry I do not want to see it as indoor netball courts or anything else. Let us make real use of that site because the views from up there are absolutely fantastic and you really do need to promote the Island more. Yes, if you are going to put a cheap hotel on there, fine, otherwise I want a 50 metre swimming pool; 51 metre would be great because you could have a metre boom that you could move that gives you 2 25s and then a 50 and you could get teams in. If you have got a 50 metre pool you can get teams in to swim in competition. But with Les Quennevais, as great as it is, it is an 8 lane, 25 metre pool. You have built a new one at Langford; it is a 25 metre, 5 lane pool. Nobody builds 5 lanes - you build 6, you build 8, you build 10 - but you do not build a 5 lane pool. I think that was something to do with the planning for the design. It is a superb building, but it is such a pity that it is only 5 lanes. Haute Vallée is 6 lanes. You cannot run

competitions in Haute Vallée because it is too hot. We have tried and we have had to sit outside and go in and out the doors. You have people liaising with the results and they could not work inside the building because it was too hot and we had to go and walk outside in the back - luckily it was a sunny day - and we did it outside. Then you turn around and walk back into this absolute wall of heat and at 5.00 p.m. when we finished and we were only out there for 2 and a half hours we were all dehydrated and I went home and slept.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Just summing up then, Mrs. Penfold, obviously there have been a lot of pools built, but none of them have really met your specific needs?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

No.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

So, when Fort Regent closed down, when the decision was made to move that pool to the AquaSplash, what negotiations, if any, took place on whether there should be a proper competitive pool on the Island?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

I think there were a lot of discussions that went on because I know there is a load of paperwork in my office. Jersey Swimming Club was very involved at that time, but just people do not listen and it is ...

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

You obviously see a totally obvious case for such a pool. You have obviously made this picture that you are having to sort of grab everywhere and you are having to do bits and pieces everywhere, but never quite in the environment you think is desirable. Why did it not come to pass, do you think?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

I do not know. I honestly still maintain that there is nobody that was in the States at the time that was interested in swimming and I know we get very angry. There are people within the Jersey Swimming Club who have been around for a long time that may not be on board at the moment, but they have their hearts very much set on Jersey Swimming Club and if you mention ... well, one of the Minister's that was there for sport now says that he did not want them to close the Fort, well, I am sorry but we have got evidence that he did say: "That is fine, go ahead and close it." They get very angry about it because we were not listened to.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Who was that?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

I am not naming him, but let us say he lives near a golf course out at St. Brelade.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay, we get the picture.

Mrs. C. Penfold:

But no, it is just one of those things. I have gone on radio and said it would be lovely to have a 50 metre pool and I know it is a "pipe dream" because I know it is going to cost a lot of money. But I was talking to Bill Davies, our chief coach, recently and he said when they decided to close the Fort Regent pool he had the offer on a 50 metre pool - a shell - that you drop in, you dig a hole in the ground, you drop the shell in, 50 metre pool. It does not take a lot more work to get it right and he offered it to them. The only thing they had to do was pay the freightage to get it to Jersey and it was somewhere in Europe where they had ordered one too many, believe it or not, and they had a spare one, and because he did the ground work they were prepared to give it to Jersey as long as Jersey could freight it here and they turned it down. Now, that is the closest we have ever come to getting a 50 metre pool and it is probably

the closest we are ever going to get to getting a 50 metre pool. But having gone on radio and said that, I heard Paul De Feu(?) went on afterwards and said: "We do not need a 50 metre pool for just 8 swimmers." Now, he is talking about maybe the 8 top swimmers that you have got in the Island and I have known Paul for many years. What he is not thinking is - and you know from netball- the more you train, the greater you build up your strength and your endurance. So, therefore if you take a swimmer and train them in a 25 metre pool, if you then train them in a 50 metre pool then their endurance and their physical ability is going to grow that much more. So, you do not build a 50 metre pool just for the competitive top swimmers; you build it to train your youth to get them stronger and fitter and there are so many other things you can do with it.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay, well, you have made a very strong case.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I was just going to add, presumably it is short-sighted as well, because it does not take into account the development aspect, as you have mentioned, and it seems to be a problem not limited just to sport, I am afraid, in Jersey?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

Well, yes, but I have to say we always knock Guernsey, do we not? Guernsey are not a lot better than us because they have just built a brand new 25 metre, 6 lane pool in the new school in Guernsey with electronic equipment. So, they can do lots with it. You think: "Great; competitions." (1) they have not got enough seating for people to sit there and watch a competition; and (2) instead of a small pool for the warm-down which is important, they have put in a hydrotherapy pool, so that is not going to be a lot of use either. So, it happens; people do not ask the right people. It is like somebody with a football pitch building a football pitch for netballers to play on and I am sure the sizes are completely different.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

This is all very interesting, but in a way we have got to keep to the Fort. Now, the Fort is involved with Island sport. Do you think Langford and the schools you have mentioned, like Haute Vallée ... the problem is there is this feeling that the schools should be used for community purposes; they should almost be an extension of the Fort replacement, as you have said. But they are essentially built for schools and there is a real problem when you try and build school facilities also as community facilities. Do you think there is a real issue there?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

I think there is a problem. I am horrified, the fact that Haute Vallée has a very nice - for school use - 6 lane, 25 metre pool. I have gone and refereed swimming competitions up at Langford where the Girls' College have invited other schools to take part. The only swimmers that can swim in Haute Vallée School are the ones that belong to either Jersey Swimming Club or Tigers. There are no swimmers within Haute Vallée School that have learnt to swim at Haute Vallée School; when they have got a 6 lane, 25 metre pool. I know the old excuse from teachers is that they cannot fit it into the school curriculum because it takes half an hour to bus the children backwards and forwards to pools. "Sorry, you have got one on site. Start using it." I am absolutely horrified at the number of children that cannot swim on the Island. You have got that with Hautlieu(?). I have had teenage girls swimming in shorts and tops because they do not own a swimming costume and they do not want to wear a bikini, and it does not dawn on them that swimming in a T-shirt and shorts is going to drag and they are not going to get anywhere. These kids should have been taught how to swim. We are an island; we are surrounded by water. It is important that children learn how to swim. Adults need to learn to swim.

Deputy M. Tadier:

To be fair, some of them are very good at golf though.

Mrs. C. Penfold:

They might be, yes, but if they go surfing in the summer, golf is not going to help them from drowning, is it?

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I think in a way we have covered most of the last questions, which is more detail about netball and swimming, but there is an issue with question 9. It is about the extent to which ... one of the starting points of the Fort is when people go there, where there were other activities, they get drawn into these or they use the café and all this. Montfort, do you want to ask a question there?

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes, question 9; basically are any of your club members encouraged to come and use Fort Regent's other facilities and different activities during the year?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

I know that a lot of our Association members are involved in the gym because I have seen them walking past there when I have been doing classes and so that side of it, yes. As far as the café is concerned, we have sent a letter before now because we have been so disappointed with the food and the service there. So, no, we are not that impressed with the café.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Okay, but you did say that you encourage them to use the gym, for example?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Yes, definitely. It is a superb gym, yes.

Ms. Y. Sheldon:

They would participate in other sports as well. There is 5-a-side football that some girls would participate in. There is also the squash. They will also do volleyball, basketball because there is such a wide range of sports available that if you are sports-minded then you would necessarily play these other sports as well.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

The fitness classes up there, as they have come into a tournament they have heard these fitness classes going; the music and the shouting and they have thought: “Yes, I did not realise that went on up there. Yes.”

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

The issue with the café is that because the food is junk food and it is not ... you are teaching someone a sport and health and fitness and ...?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

They are just never prepared. They know the amount of people that are going to be participating in a big event and they just never seem to have the staff and they never seem to be prepared for it; the right food.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Would you say that that is something that is lacking anyway? You do not have to answer that.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Not when it is quiet, probably, but when we have big tournaments on, you put down how many people you think are going to be participating and they are just never prepared.

Deputy M. Tadier:

To put the question in context, partly the reason we ask is because certainly in the past there has always been the feeling that people would come up to Fort Regent especially for the swimming pool, I think is a very good example, so people would come to swim, but then they would enjoy the other facilities. It might be the aquarium or they would go to the restaurant, the café and it was very much almost a day out. I think nowadays there is almost a fear that people go to the Fort for one specific reason, either to go to the gym, to go swimming, play netball, to go to a concert and then just go.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

I would say you are right, yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

So, what other facilities do you think might be useful if you could, as Deputy Pitman said, wave a magic wand; would there be anything that you would suggest?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

It would be changing the café for me. There is no character in the café whatsoever. There never has been. It is a shame because as you walk up it is there and it could be a focal point. It has just never been attractive to use.

Mrs. C. Penfold:

I think also depending on what you want it can be expensive because, for example, I quite like hot chocolate. I can get a hot chocolate out of the machine outside my door for 40 pence, but if that is not working and I go down there it is £1.40 and it is too sweet to drink. So, the people that are running it, they are there to make the money, are they not, so ... you see parents sit there and it is a lot of junk food. You can have chips and all the rest of it and to a certain extent parents still need to be educated not to feed their children junk and quite often you will get kids that will sit up there and just eat chips and nothing else. When we did the Pool View Café we used to sell an awful lot of chips and cheese and chips and more chips and burgers and we did try to do some healthy stuff as well, but that was very busy up there. But the other thing is that people like to come up there to eat because they could look out at the views. That was another attractive point. The other thing we found within Jersey Swimming Club is we have lost our social side of the club because we are there and we are there and we are there and the parents there do not meet the parents from there, et cetera, and we have just found that ... we have been trying it for the last 2 to 3 years since the Fort closed. We have definitely lost that social side. People like to come and they like to socialise. They like to watch the children swim and they do not mind if on

a Friday night they have got a pint in their hand while they are watching through the window. We have lost all that now; it is gone. We are trying to get it back. We are now using the soft play area on a Friday night and we are going to make teas and coffees to try and give the parents - just to try and get back that social thing. But we have to fight for every bit that we use and with using the gym facilities, et cetera, up here, our swimmers are not going to come up to the Fort to use the gym because they are swimming up at Langford. So, we have been trying to use the gym at Langford. They have got a fantastic facility at Langford, but that is costing us an arm and a leg because they are charging us by the hour, what we do. So, at the moment we are looking at that. We have been using it because we have got swimmers going to Island games and they need that extra exercise, but we are not getting any help on those grounds. They tell us we are having it cheaper, but it is still too expensive for us, so I have got a bill sitting in the office for over £500 at the moment to pay just for the use of the little gym that they have got up there and the dance studio. We do not want to pass that on to the parents, so the club has to maintain that expense and it is just very difficult to do. So, I think they would use the gym that is at the Fort if they were nearer the swimming pool. They need a gym area close to the pools that they are using.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay, we might have a chance to look at other issues as well. I wonder, Trevor, if you could do number 10?

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Indeed. A slightly different angle for this question, but what importance do you all face on the heritage aspect of the Fort - just to most people there seems to be a conflict between sport and heritage - so what value do you put on? Do you even see it as a heritage site?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

Absolutely, you cannot miss it.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

No, and the visitors that we have from England, their mouths drop. They just think it is such a fantastic venue. They think the whole setup is so unique. There is an atmosphere there. I am very, very proud to hold events in the Fort because it has just got everything for us, has it not? It is superb.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Is there almost a sense in which we have been apologetic for the fact that Fort Regent is, on the one hand, a fort and it is also a sports centre which, for some, it has been an inconvenience? Is there, perhaps, a way in which we should capitalise more on the fact that we have this amazing heritage type which is capable of attracting people for various reasons; could we do more?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

You only have to look up to Fort Regent and see it. I just think it is a superb venue. It is kind of majestic sitting up there and as I am bringing people, say, from the airport and I say: "And that is where we are going" and they go: "Up there?" and I say: "That is Fort Regent, our sporting venue." They are absolutely enthralled with it and we jotted down here about the use of the views. People just do not get up there; up where the ramparts are.

Ms. Y. Sheldon:

You have got to go up to the gardens and all that and see it. It is beautiful.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Yes, the views are amazing and there are very few people that go up there.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

How do you think it could be made more attractive?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

I am trying to think what we had ... we had a function up there and food was presented up there and it was superb. I cannot think what it was, but we had food and drinks. Sorry, my memory has gone, but it was superb. The views were fantastic and of course looking down over the top with Queens Hall is brilliant for spectators.

Mrs. C. Penfold:

Yes, I think you could if necessary move the café from where it is - because you cannot call it is a restaurant, it is a café - and make it into, as I have got in my letter, a family type orientated restaurant, but up top where you have got the views.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Yes.

Mrs. C. Penfold:

But you need it to be a sort of restaurant where you can go in and eat healthy food, but it is not too expensive. Jersey has got a wonderful selection of restaurants to eat at. We have got all the best, but we would need something more family orientated up there where ...

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Definitely healthy because you have got people who are interested in their health - sporty people - and they are kind of disappointed when they have got to choose from a list of things that are not good for them.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

If you go to a gym - most gyms - and you pay the membership, you normally find if they have got anything in there it is healthy food.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Definitely; this is why we felt compelled to write a letter of complaint because it is not in our natures to complain, but the Fort management said: “Do it; how else are they going to know that it is not fitting?”

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Did you get a reply?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Yes, I did. It was quite a few years ago that I did it. It was about 4 years ago, was it not, because we were so disappointed? We ended up making sandwiches for the next day. The food was so bad on the Saturday that we straightaway said: “Right, who wants sandwiches for tomorrow? We will put together packed lunches and we will sell them at [probably were not supposed to say that] cost so that you have got a healthy lunch to get you through the next day’s play.”

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

One of you said earlier that you did not feel that people listened although you made your arguments and would that be a fair assumption then, 2 hours in the pool or however long it is at a netball match and then you go and eat a bowl of chips, it does not really ...

Mrs. C. Penfold:

You will still get swimmers in competitions at Les Quennevais that will try and get a bowl of chips in between. The swimming competitions are usually split in 3 sessions throughout the day and the majority of them now will come with a packed lunch and they will bring pasta because it is very good for them, at lunchtime, and they will bring fruit, but there will always be the odd child that will go and try and get chips in between.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Oh, yes, definitely.

Mrs. C. Penfold:

You need to educate them not to do that really. There is nothing wrong with chips if you do it a little and not often. It is a treat. It should be a treat, not an every day: "I am going to eat chips." The other thing I think the Fort needs is it needs somewhere where you can go and hear the history of the Fort; there is not anywhere. You can see pictures on the wall which I always think are fascinating of the old area where they used to put coal and God knows what else before they put the dome on. That is lovely. You walk past that and a lot of visitors stop and looked at those pictures.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

You see the visitors searching for ...

Mrs. C. Penfold:

Yes, more information.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

You do.

Mrs. C. Penfold:

Yes, and you have got one picture of Lily Langtry which they have taken the picture out, and they have got one which has got information on it and they stand there and they read it all the way through to the bottom. You need somewhere up there where people can go and ... I went to Longleat last week because I was away in England on holiday and they have got one little area off the shop where he is just sitting there and telling you the history of the family and there were people sitting in there just looking. I think you need that one room and with televisions you have got a T.V. (television) that they have recently put ... have you seen that one by the Gloucester Hall? There is a big flat-screen television on the wall that they put on because there was world football or something on and they felt people would want to be able to see this T.V. Well, it is on the wall in the corridor. There is no seating. There is nowhere for anybody to sit and look at it and to me it is a complete and utter waste of money putting it up on that

wall anyway. Most of the time it is switched off, but you could put something like that in a room with a video cassette, whatever, running to give people a history of the Fort. I think that is lacking up there. People stop and they look at those cannons that they have produced and put up there. I think maybe the focus has been on sport and the gym, which is good, but you need someone to focus on the history of the Fort as well to bring that forward to the people.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Well, we have covered a lot of areas and we are now getting back to the general ... are there any other final points on the future of the Fort as well as any club points you would wish to bring up?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

I could only stress again what I said, that if we lose the Fort as a sporting venue, then we lose the future of our Association because I cannot see us getting a venue where there are going to be the availability of 3 indoor courts, and that will be a huge loss to us because we have got so many exciting ideas that we want to have a go at.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

You are happy that in terms of working with the Fort management you feel you do get listened to, do you?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

They are superb - absolutely superb - and I must say that Education, Sport and Culture have always backed us. We are very fortunate there, possibly because netball is one of the main sports in schools, so obviously they know that there needs to be an extension of that out of school. But, no, I am very, very pleased with the management of the Fort.

Mrs. C. Penfold:

Yes, I agree with that. I think they are superb, they are really good. I do not know how you do it, but

you have got to make the Fort more open for everybody.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Definitely.

Mrs. C. Penfold:

So, therefore you have got to do something to bring the young children, the young people in off the streets and not have to pay a fortune to go; something which we can entertain them and keep them doing something physical without them roaming the streets. Friday night down at the AquaSplash area when we have got our club night, it is horrendous the number of children that are just dropped off there for the evening. We get kids coming in most of the evening looking for change and they have obviously been given a £20 note to get out of the way. They have got a disco running for the juniors, but you have got so many children there that are just wandering around and basically getting into trouble because they are bored. Well, if you had somewhere at the Fort where they could go and even if it was a dance studio and they could ...

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Give it a go.

Mrs. C. Penfold:

Let us see them up there; let us see them safe; let us see them not wandering the streets, and getting fit at the same time.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Just one last point or it may not be the last, but it is certainly the last point I will be making. Mrs. Nelson quite rightly spoke about the entrance to the Fort being fairly grandiose and it is in some ways breathtaking, but there also seems to be the other issue of how you have to get to that point in the first place. Now, there are 2 ways; you can either come up by the car park at the top and drive up, but most

access for the ordinary punters, so to speak, would come from the car park at the bottom and you get a lift up. It is not quite as grandiose; not very inspiring. So, is there anything that we could do; are there any ideas that you have about access in the first place? Because there are 2 issues; there is an issue of enticing people to Fort Regent which means you need to have the facilities there in the first place, but there is also the physical aspect of getting to the Fort. Is there anything that we could be doing better to make sure that there is a ...?

Mrs. C. Penfold:

Bring back the cable cars. People are daft enough to think they are taking a chance going up in something that is on a couple of wires.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

It was the expense as well.

Mrs. C. Penfold:

Yes, but you would not have to have the expense. You would have to cover it some way whereby it was free.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Definitely, yes.

Mrs. C. Penfold:

Absolutely, but you cannot ... you have got to get people in from that town side, I think, because at the moment you have only got the Pier Road end to come up the top. You can if you are feeling really, really fit go up that flight of stairs and I have not done that for a little while because I have got arthritis in my knees, so it is a little bit difficult when you get further up the top. But for young, fit people they have got extra exercises than going up, anyway. It needs tidying up around that area. Quite often there is a lot of litter around where the trees and all that lot are.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

I think the general feeling has been, with the Fort, that nobody is going to inject any money into the Fort until a decision has been made as to what it is going to be and, like the cable cars, if it is decided that it is going to be a sporting venue and it is going to be a community area, then somehow the money is going to have to be found. I do not know where from, but they do need to inject a bit of money into it because I know that a lot of things have not been done, like the curtains are looking very tattered and torn and we know that there is not the money to do it right now and so we have just got on with it. You do not comment on that because we have got our courts and that is what we want; the indoor courts.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay, Ian, do you want to say anything?

Mr. I. Barclay:

No, I do not want to say anything else or ask any other questions. I deal with a lot of swimming clubs and ...

Mrs. C. Penfold:

Yes, they have got a one track mind.

Mr. I. Barclay:

I know both professionally and personally because my daughter swims and I understand the huge impact that they have; the number of kids at school and the number of parents that get involved. I do understand the issues there and often it is not appreciated just how much input clubs like that have to help the improvement of just general involvement of the community. She played netball as well, by the way, so I do understand. So, yes, I hear and I understand and I empathise a lot. So, I have got no other questions because you have said it all.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Out of interest, is that scope for development with the men's netball, is that something you can bring into the Island?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

It is huge in New Zealand and Australia - absolutely huge - and it is so healthy to have male and females playing the same sport. The trouble is the men are usually better at the sport.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Well, I was a stunning goal defence. I do not know what position you play.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

But it is just so healthy for any sport to have mixed sport and it is definitely the way forward for netball.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

But do they have a restriction on that because with football I know at schools they cannot play together at a certain age, can they, competitively?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

That is right.

Mr. I. Barclay:

Because it is one concept, is it not?

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Yes, that is right.

Mr. I. Barclay:

Yes, and the same, we have to split rugby which I coach. You have to split it to under 13. We just lost one of our best players, who is a girl.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Apart from touch. Did you say rugby?

Mr. I. Barclay:

Yes.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Yes, apart from touch, which can be mixed because it is ...

Mr. I. Barclay:

Non contact.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Yes.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay, well, on behalf of the non golf playing Members of the States or the residents in St. Brelade, I would like to thank you very much. We are very impressed by your commitment and your passion and where you can see a way forward, what you are planning. That has been very impressive, I should add. So, certainly we will be kept on our toes with the kind of pressure and enthusiasm that is coming from all of you, even if, in terms of swimming, things did not quite lead to the result people wanted. So, thank you very, very much for coming.

Mrs. J. Nelson:

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to put our views forward.

