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Comments: Submission regarding the Proposed Establishment of the Jersey Enterprise Board.

I believe that WEB has been a disaster for Jersey. In my mind it is an example of development gone horribly wrong, with an ugly mess of inappropriate buildings. The huge potential that the site had has probably now been lost forever, to the regret of generations of islanders to come. Are we going the same way elsewhere with the creation of JEB?

How has this come about? Well clearly WEB is directly responsible for the current situation. I am sure that there are many reasons for this, but it seems to me that there are two main problems with the WEB setup that has contributed towards the problem.

1) WEB was setup as an arms length company with the objective of generating profits. This seems madness to me. Short term profit motives go completely against effective development. It has resulted in parcels of land being sold off to the highest bidder, with apparently no consideration to the unified whole, with priority being on business development, and hardly any mixed development, meaning that it is a dangerous, unpleasant place at night. It also means that we have such crazy things as a car park which charges prohibitive fees, and cross charging between WEB and the States. Finally it means that we are paying a huge amount of money to the board of WEB - according to the published accounts, the head of WEB earned nearly a quarter of a million in salary and benefits - a great reward for a dogs dinner!

Did the development need to generate short term profits? No, I don't think so - the States were/are in a very healthy financial position, with no external borrowing. Any costs which had already been incurred on the site were sunk costs and should not therefore have been an issue when determining what income could have been received from the site.

I believe the development should have focused on high quality mixed development, in a traditional Jersey architectural style, with many areas of public space and squares, with cafes/restaurants along the marina, and open green spaces to admire the views of the castle and the bay. This would not have generated as much short term profit as what has actually happened, but it would have been immeasurably better for the island in the long term, improving quality of life for islanders and increasing the attractiveness as a tourist destination. But this was never going to happen with the WEB structure, as short term profit was the priority. If JEB follows the same approach, we can only expect the same in the future.

Secondly, no direct accountability to the States Assembly. I am sure that there was some form of accountability intended, in a roundabout way, but the reality was that there was no direct Ministerial accountability for WEB, and by this I mean a single Minister, not a group. With a development as important as this, there should be a very clear accountability, and a very clear steer from the Council of Ministers regarding the objectives of the development. I do not believe that the WEB structure delivers this, and JEB is probably going to go the same way. Finally, I always have to question why a complicated structure is needed to do something - unnecessary complexity causes confusion and reduces transparency and accountability.