

2.12 The Connétable of St. Helier of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services regarding the use of balance of funds to provide later opening times for car park lifts:

Would the Minister state the balance of funds in the car parks trading account and agree to investigate using some of these funds to provide later opening times for car park lifts?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye (The Minister for Transport and Technical Services):

The issue of lifts in multi-storey car parks came up during question time a fortnight ago and I said then that I was very happy to pursue discussions with Members, so I am delighted that the Connétable has decided to open discussions today, albeit in a rather unusual format. The draft accounts for 2008 indicate a balance of £9.9 million in the car park trading fund, £30,000 of that per year is already allocated for the ongoing maintenance of all the lifts in the multi-storey car parks. In 2008 a further £30,000 is being provided to improve lifts to facilitate disabled access. So, in that context, Sir, I am happy to assure the Connétable of St. Helier that I am prepared to investigate looking at funds for opening the lifts later. Perhaps, Sir, if I could just indulge you momentarily, I did... and I apologise to the Assembly for misleading - I was given slightly inaccurate information last time when I informed Members that all multi-storey car parks close at 10.00 p.m. That is not accurate. I am now informed that in fact Sand Street lifts close at 8.00 p.m. and we keep the lifts open at Patriotic Street until 11.00 p.m. in order to accommodate the shift changes for nurses and other personnel working at the general hospital. I apologise to Members for having provided inaccurate information earlier.

2.12.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

I thank the Minister for his clarification on the last set of questions. It is encouraging to note that lifts can be kept open later without being prone to vandals. I would be interested to know whether this whole matter will be part of the long awaited integrated traffic and transport plan and when we may hope to see that?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

Well, I am very grateful to the Connétable for his encouragement, Sir. I would also encourage him to bolster his Honorary Police force which is currently very severely depleted and perhaps reconsider his policy of selling-off public toilets and turning them into restaurants, all of which would help cut down on the abuse of multi-storey car parks, with people using them as an alternative public convenience, urinating, defecating, vomiting and, of course, the Honorary Police might help us with the drug issue because there are numerous needles left in multi-storey car parks as well. I encourage the Connétable in his endeavours. [Laughter]

2.12.2 The Connétable of St. Helier:

I guess we knew it could not last; the spirit of helpfulness has deserted the Minister. The Minister did not answer my question and I repeat it for the Minister. Will the Minister be making the later opening of these car park lifts part of the long awaited integrated traffic and transport policy and when can we hope to see it?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I said I would investigate the matter. That is not necessarily a guarantee that it will form part of the integrated travel policy which, for the information of Members, I will be reviewing the final draft with my senior officers at Transport and Technical Services this Friday.

2.12.3 Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I am encouraged by the Minister's reply, Sir. I too have had correspondence on this matter. It is encouraging that Patriotic Street is open until 11.00 p.m. to enable nurses changing shifts to use the lifts. I would be grateful if the Minden Street car park could also be changed to 11.00 p.m. to enable senior citizens and theatre goers at the Art Centre to be able to use the ones in Minden Street

at 11.00 p.m. I also understand that there is a toilet block adjacent in Minden Street block, which hopefully will be used. As I stated previously, Sir...

The Deputy Bailiff:

Can you come to your question, please?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes, as I stated previously, Sir, that we should not surrender to the hooligan and the vandal. Does the Minister not agree?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

Yes, I do agree, Sir.

2.12.4 Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville:

I too have correspondence on this particular matter from the Minister, even though he claims that he had not had any communication on it at the last sitting. His e-mail to me of 1st May stated that there were various closing times for each of the car parks. Could I request a closing time of midnight so theatre goers, cinema goers and people that go to town for entertainment, meals, et cetera, can know exactly what time the car parks are going to be closing, rather than having all these various differing closing times, which are completely confusing to everyone? Thank you, Sir.

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I apologise to the Assistant Minister. Sometimes it is not clear, when you receive e-mail communications, whether Deputies are inquiring in a Deputorial capacity or an Assistant Ministerial capacity. Therefore I do apologise for what I thought was a personal inquiry which, in reality, turned out to be an official inquiry from the Department of Education. Sir, I do apologise to the Deputy of Grouville for not having understood that clearly the first time round. I am also grateful to the Deputy, when she raised the matter earlier. As a consequence, we put up notices of the closing times of the lifts in the lifts so that anyone using lifts would know when they were going to cease operation. That seems to have proved relatively successful bar, of course, the predictable vandalism of those signs by people who do not agree with the closing times. I have said I would investigate the matter. I will certainly look into the possibility of a midnight closing time but, at this stage, I regret I cannot make any guarantees.

2.12.5 The Deputy of Trinity:

Just a couple of points. The Minister just stated about the signs. As I understand, I think the signs are just stuck on with a bit of Blu-Tack in the lifts themselves, so I will leave that to people to think what they like. Would the Minister clarify a point that he said a couple of minutes ago? He mentioned that there were quite a great number of used needles found in car parks or was he specifically saying that there are a great number of needles found in the lifts? Thank you, Sir.

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

Needles, regrettably, Sir, found both in the car parks but, more commonly, in substantial numbers, at the bottom of lift shafts and indeed there have been occasions where the maintenance staff have had to basically wear special protective equipment in order to deal with that particular problem. I am pleased to hear that the Deputy has been inspecting our notices thoroughly. I was not aware they were attached with Blu-Tack but that is fascinating. I do need to, though, remind Members that in the course of providing public services, a balance has to be struck and I would remind Members of what I said last time. The majority of the use of Minden Street car park, which is the one in question, Minden Place car park, well over 80 per cent of its use is during the day time, of course. It is a shoppers' car park and I know the Connétable of St. Helier would agree with me, it is absolutely vital we encourage shoppers to come into the Island's retail centre. That is why we

have to consider an earlier closing time in order to ensure that overnight damage does not occur, which then renders the lifts inoperable for the key use the next morning.

2.12.6 The Deputy of St. Martin:

We have heard about the perceived vandalism around the area and also the unruly behaviour but is it possible, maybe, to request the Minister to have a roundtable discussion maybe with the Constable of St. Helier and the Minister of Home Affairs to discuss how this could be policed because, to me, it does not seem a huge problem to have the odd officer around these areas at around 10.00 p.m.? We are not asking people to stay out all night but surely around 10.00 p.m. or 11.00 p.m., can I ask will the Minister take steps to arrange meetings with the Constable of St. Helier and the Minister of Home Affairs to see if this area could be better policed?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

It is always a pleasure to see the Deputy of St. Martin so enthusiastic about policing and security issues but I have to say I think I would be wasting the time of the Minister of Home Affairs and the Connétable of St. Helier has got far better things to do than consider posting guards late at night on our multi-storey car park lifts. Frankly, I do not really think that is the way forward.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

I have to say I really am surprised at the defeatist attitude of the Minister.