

2025.02.04

**Deputy S.M. Ahier of St. Helier North of the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development regarding the Battle of Flowers Association (OQ.29/2025):**

Will the Minister advise how much oversight he has of the Battle of the Flowers Association and explain the rationale behind the Government grant of £270,000 to support the 2024 event?

**Deputy K.F. Morel of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity (The Minister for Sustainable Economic Development):**

I thank the Deputy for his question. The Battle of Flowers is an independent organisation which makes an application for an event grant from my department based on a series of stretching but achievable performance measures. My officers meet regularly with the Battle of Flowers Association to ensure that public money is being spent in accordance with the principles of the Public Finances Manual. The larger one-off grant in 2024 allowed for a reformatting of the event, particularly following disruption after COVID, and participation by every Parish, a headliner act on the first night, and additional concerts on days 2 and 3. As a consequence of this extra funding and reformatted event, more than 22,000 people enjoyed the Battle of Flowers last year; a significant uplift with 6,000 more tickets sold than on previous years.

**4.1.1 Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

The Minister has been quoted as saying: “We are awaiting a grant request for 2025 and stand ready to support this.” Is his support dependent upon having sight of the 2024 accounts? Is it true that exhibitors have still not been paid for last year’s event?

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

Questions as to who has or has not been paid for last year’s event need to be asked of the Battle of Flowers Association. But my understanding is there are some entities, including possibly people, who are still awaiting payment, but I do not know if they are exhibitors or anybody else. That does need to be asked of the Battle of Flowers Association. We are awaiting accounts for the 2024 period, and my understanding is we would want to see those accounts before we are able to supply a grant.

**4.1.2 Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North:**

Would the Minister advise if there is a clear government policy in relation to awarding grants and subsidies for cultural and community events such as Battle of Flowers, Battle of Jersey and similar?

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

The department requires business plans and an agreed set of performance measures for funding to be released. Officers meet regularly with events’ organisers and also acquire a post-event report.

**Deputy I. Gardiner:**

My question was does the policy exist?

**The Bailiff:**

I am assuming the Minister has just articulated the policy.

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

That was my understanding.

**4.1.3 Deputy I. Gardiner:**

Okay, supplementary. Where is the policy published that the independent organisations and charity can review it before applying for the grants?

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

With regard to arts, culture and heritage grants, because they are wide-ranging from hundreds of thousands of pounds all the way down to hundreds of pounds, I do not believe there is one policy paper for all of those. What we have is a set of criteria. These can be found on the Creative Island Partnership, particularly for those smaller grants. For the larger grants it is in accordance with the Public Finances Manual that we determine whether grant funding is made available.

**4.1.4 Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade:**

The Minister is potentially going to be handing over hundreds of thousands of pounds of public money to support this year's Battle. Can he confirm that he has full confidence in the Battle of Flowers Association?

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

That is something that I would have to refrain from giving a view on at the moment because I think it has been well-publicised following recent meetings that there is concern among the Association and questions are being asked among the Association. It would be my requirement that we need to understand that the Association is in good order and is working in the appropriate ways to stage this year's event before being able to provide that funding.

**4.1.5 Deputy J. Renouf:**

Is the Minister going to be taking any actions to try and ensure that the Battle of Flowers Association meets the standards, shall we say, to which he would expect for an organisation that he is handing public money to?

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

Actions in terms of officers engaging with the Battle of Flowers Association, trying to understand where the Battle of Flowers Association is in terms of its governance structures and procedures, these are the sorts of actions that I will be taking. It is understanding where the Battle of Flowers Association is. It is not, in my view, my remit or my jurisdiction, so to speak, to go into the Battle of Flowers and engineer, let us say, change myself. That I think is for the Battle of Flowers Association itself. This is the sort of situation that we see in Jersey where independent third-party organisations, which are not Government organisations, the Minister has no vires over them.

[9:45]

They therefore have to apply for grant funding in an appropriate fashion, as has been previously mentioned in these answers. It is on satisfaction of those criteria, particularly with regard to the Public Finances Manual, that any funding would be permitted. But, it is not for me to go into the Battle of Flowers Association to “sort it out”. That is not my role.

#### **4.1.6 Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf of St. Saviour:**

Having been in the Minister’s position before in relation to Battle, I was looking in advance of this question to a 2015 report. Would the Minister agree that it is now well past the time that there is a decisive, forward-looking, positive review of governance of the Battle of Flowers because I do not accept ... does he not agree that he is responsible for ensuring that the organisation in which he is putting public money should be fit for purpose with appropriate governance?

#### **Deputy K.F. Morel:**

The grants are given on an annual basis ordinarily for some organisations such as A.L.O.s (arm’s length organisations). We are seeking to see whether it is possible to provide funding on a 3-year basis, but still those grants would be handed out on an annual basis. In terms of independent third-party organisations, such as the Battle of Flowers, I do feel it is the role of the Association to get itself in order. I do not think it is the role of Government to do that. I think that is Government ... again, it is this idea that everyone seeks to Government to sort it out. The Battle of Flowers Association is decades - maybe a century - old organisation. I am not sure exactly of its age. It is up to those members of that Association to ensure that they are fit for purpose. We will determine whether we agree with that in terms of whether then funding is made available. What we will do is provide support, and I am keen to support the Association as it sorts itself out, but it is not for Government to sort it out.

#### **4.1.7 Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:**

The Minister speaks French and he is aware of the word *responsabilité* and there are three words in English: responsibility, accountability and liability. Does he really think that he can stand in this Assembly where numerous predecessors of his have also, together with our Constables that are in this Assembly, and say that his Department is not really going to have anything responsible or accountable for sorting out what is a long outstanding issue of a float builders’ association and a commercial event organiser? Does he not think it is now time to put the Battle on the right footing going forward and not have these endless questions about public money being wasted and unaccountable?

#### **Deputy K.F. Morel:**

I do not believe that is what I was talking about. I believe the Deputy, to some extent, misrepresents what I was saying. The Battle of Flowers Association is a third party independent organisation run by its members. It is incorporated as an association. I am not a member of that association, maybe the Deputy is a member; if so he is well-placed to help try and sort that out. We, as Government, will provide the support and advice to the Association. We can provide ideas about how they could resolve their problems and we are more than happy to support them in these ways. But the Association itself has to make its own decisions as to how it wants to structure itself otherwise it is no longer an association, it becomes just a

part of government and they are set up as an independent association. We will support them however we can to help them through any changes that they wish to make. As I said, we are willing to suggest changes but we cannot make those changes ourselves.

**Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:**

I just want to understand, Sir, I am hearing the Minister talk about a word “association” and I know it is wrong, so what am I supposed to do? Can I just say to the Minister that he is not intentionally misleading the Assembly?

**The Bailiff:**

The point of a point of order is on what do you wish me to rule?

**Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:**

How I can correct the Minister’s assertion that it is an association when it is actually a limited company?

**The Bailiff:**

Well, I think you have said that.

**4.1.8 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour:**

If the changes that the Minister is expecting are not made, is the Minister prepared to limit or not give funding to this organisation? What are the Minister’s boundaries in terms of expectations and whether the money is given or not?

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

I think the Battle of Flowers, which has been going for more than a century, 120-odd years, is an important part of Jersey’s calendar and cultural calendar. Therefore, I think it is ideal that we have the Battle of Flowers taking place in the summer. We, as a Government, can look to provide the event ourselves, we can ask the Battle of Flowers Association to continue to provide the event, or we can seek another means of providing that event. I will make a decision according to the information provided to me by the Battle of Flowers Association. I apologise if it is a limited company, then it is a limited company and the Deputy is fine about that. It still does not change the fact that it is third party and independent of Government. It is its own entity. The States Assembly is not responsible for the Battle of Flowers Association. The Government is not responsible for the Battle of Flowers Association. It is entirely responsible for itself. I will only provide funding when satisfied that that funding will be spent appropriately. Ideally, we would love to see a Battle of Flowers going ahead this year, and I will work with them in all sorts of different ways to try to ensure that that does happen. But I think the Battle of Flowers Association, whether it is a limited company or an association, needs to make some decisions itself, and it needs to get to grips with those decisions quickly, otherwise it will find itself in a very difficult situation.

**4.1.9 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Would the Minister keep the Assembly updated on this and whether the appropriate changes have been made? Also, could the Minister reassure the Assembly that the pot of money for

events such as this, that there is enough to go around for other events that are important to the community such as Pride and other cultural events?

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

There is enough for many events. It is impossible to say there is enough for all events because the list of potential events is never-ending. At some point the pot of money does run out. But we have budgeted for certain major events this year; Battle of Flowers being one of them. Pride, I believe, being another. But, every Member of the Assembly and every person in Jersey could come forward with a grant application for an event, and obviously we could not fund all of those. So it is not a never-ending pot of money.

**4.1.10 Deputy D.J. Warr of St. Helier South:**

Could the Minister confirm that he or his team had sight of the 2023 Battle of Flower accounts before they gave out a larger sum this year?

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

I would have to confirm with my team.

**4.1.11 Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade:**

Can the Minister confirm that he is funding the Battle of Flowers for their 2024 overspend, in addition to the grant funding they are applying for in 2025?

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

I am unable to confirm that because those decisions have not yet been made.

**4.1.12 Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

The Minister has stated that he will be working with the Battle of Flowers Association to secure the long-term future of the event. Is there any limit as to how much the Minister will grant to the Battle of Flowers Association and will this lead to underfunding of other Island events?

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

A question in the similar vein to Deputy Doublet's question. Yes, there are limits, absolutely of course there are limits because there is no never-ending pot of money. There are definitely limits as to how much I would be prepared to fund. I could not say exactly what that limit is because I would need to see a proposal from the Battle of Flowers Association before I can fund it. Last year, it was such a proposal that led to slightly increased funding in order to get the event back on its feet, particularly after the disruption caused by COVID. It made sense. I think there is an understanding in the Island and a desire in the Island to see the Battle of Flowers modernised. A 120 year-old event does need to move with the times. It is an incredibly valuable community event. I have sat in battle sheds helping build floats with my parents, with my daughter. The fact that so many generations of Islanders can come together to work on floats is absolutely magnificent, and that is the heart of the actual community element of the Battle of Flowers Association. I agree with Members, that is what is so wonderful about the Battle of Flowers. But the event itself has, I would say, in my personal view, not moved with the times in the way that it has needed to. Last year was an attempt to

do that and future funding will depend on a proposal that satisfies the requirements, both in terms of governance and ambition in terms of wanting to put on an event that people wish to see.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

Just quickly, will it lead to underfunding of other Island events; can the Minister respond please?

**The Bailiff:**

You have about a second and a half to respond to that, Minister.

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

Not intentionally, no.

**The Bailiff:**

We come to Question 2, the Connétable of St. Helier will ask of the Attorney General.

**Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier:**

I understood from the Greffe this question was being put to the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs. Is that now not the case?

**The Bailiff:**

I have simply gone from the Consolidated Order Paper, which I understood to be ... Well, as I say, I have gone from the Consolidated Order Paper. Do you have any objection?