

4.8 Deputy M. Tadier of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services regarding the opening times of Liberation Station:

Given that many Islanders work late hours and others do shift work, will the Minister look into the possibility of keeping Liberation Station open later than 6.30 p.m. on weekdays and after 6.00 p.m. at weekends so that commuters are not made to sit outside in bad weather while waiting for their bus?

Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade (The Minister for Transport and Technical Services):

In the interests of clarity to start with, I would just like to correct the timing that the Deputy has alluded to. During the summer, Liberation Station closes at 8.00 p.m. in the evening on weekdays and 6.00 p.m. on Sundays and during the winter, 6.30 p.m. on weekdays and 6.00 p.m. on Sundays. Liberation Station has now been opened for nearly 2 years and its operation is continually monitored by both T.T.S. (Transport and Technical Services) and Connex. My predecessor was also asked this question in January 2008 and he advised the questioner, who now happens to be my Assistant, that there is a balance to be struck between service to the customer and the potential risk to the facility and to other people. Paradoxically, the risk to the building and the staff becomes greater when the weather is worse as the public - whether bus passengers or not - will consider the concourse as a safer, drier and warmer place to be. Potentially, it could be another meeting place which can bring its own issues. In addition, there will be additional staffing costs to opening later which will need to be found from elsewhere. That said, I am not unsympathetic to the idea and I will, as requested by the Deputy, undertake to look into the possibility. It is a sad fact of life that, in fact, we do have to close the bus station in the evenings for fear of it being damaged by an element who take joy in doing such things and I feel it is wrong that the genuine users of the bus service have to sit outside. We have a limited number of services which do run in the evenings and, as I intimated earlier, it is a question of striking a balance which we shall seek to achieve.

4.8.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

I thank the Minister for his clarification. I was not sure I put the word "winter" in but it may have got lost in translation somewhere. I am also welcoming the fact that the Minister is broadly not closed to the idea. I would suggest that it is quite simple. We employ a security guard and this is, after all, a facility which has been purpose-built at great cost to keep people in while waiting for their bus, and I would suggest it is not quite as difficult as the Minister makes out. Will he take that point into consideration and look into the viability of employing a security guard so that people can go in there to what is, after all, a public facility?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

At present, Connex do in fact employ security guards on some of the routes to try and control the unruly element, especially on the late night buses.

4.8.2 The Deputy of St. John:

Oh, to have late night buses in St. John, come the winter. This is of real concern. This House passed a Transport Centre, Minister, and, therefore, we finish up with something which is basically a carbuncle on the boil. We finish up with a bus station that cannot keep all its buses in one area, so we have them spread over 2 or 3 areas and, yet, we cannot even keep the station open for a reasonable hour in the evening

and trouble in the past has not necessarily been at the times that the Minister is saying. Trouble usually starts much later in the evening. The many people who do use the bus station ...

The Bailiff:

The question you are coming to, Deputy, are you?

The Deputy of St. John:

Yes, Sir, I am coming to the question but I have to remind the Minister that this station is being paid for by taxpayers' money. We are seeing Connex advertising various events around the Island which have nothing to do with the bus service so, obviously, they are making money somewhere and, yet, they cannot afford to keep the bus station open any longer. Will he please explain?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I am not 100 per cent sure what the Deputy is asking but I think he is intimating that he would wish Connex to prioritise on keeping the bus station open rather than supporting local community events. I think, as I have indicated earlier on, there is merit in looking at keeping the bus station open longer and I note that, in practice, if it could be kept open, shall we say, until 8.30 p.m., there would be about another 7 services which would be covered, which I think would be quite significant. When you start getting to after 7.00 p.m., the number reduces to 5 and, after 7.30 p.m. to 3, so maybe 7.30 p.m. is the balance of time which would need to be considered. I think, certainly as I indicated earlier on, I shall be looking into the matter and seeing what can be achieved.

The Bailiff:

Deputy Tadier, do you wish a final question?

Deputy M. Tadier:

I would just like to thank the Minister for his response.