

### **3.10 Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement of the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development regarding data sharing rights (OQ.82/2025):**

Will the Minister advise whether Jersey Business will have any data sharing rights to be able to publicise the recipients of the Better Business Grant, both for transparency and to promote business improvement in Jersey, and if not, why not?

#### **Deputy K.F. Morel (The Minister for Sustainable Economic Development):**

As the Deputy will appreciate, the appropriate governance for such grant schemes requires commercially sensitive information to be submitted; Jersey Business has clear parameters set up to protect the confidentiality of the applicants. Once grant projects have been completed, Jersey Business plans to promote case studies - with the consent of the organisation cited - to demonstrate the impact of the grants and encourage others to make the most of this opportunity. Our priority has to be removing barriers, increasing investment and improving productivity. As such, the programmes have been keen to ensure all asks of business are appropriate, proportionate and certainly not off-putting. The Government will also publish delivery updates regarding the grants and the wider Better Business Support Package later in the year.

#### **3.10.1 Deputy A.F. Curtis:**

I declare that my business would be eligible for such grants, although that is shared with a wide range of businesses across the Island. Would the Minister advise, then, how he expects the success of the package will be understood across the Island, if in all likelihood most recipients and therefore examples of investment to deliver a return are not published? Notwithstanding that only the most successful will likely be those that are case studies.

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

As I said, we will seek case studies and we will seek permission to use case studies in order to encourage other businesses to engage with the programme. There is no question that we do not have and cannot seek permission to have a general catch-all publication of all applicants. I think there is a duty to commercial confidentiality and there is a duty under data protection that data sharing rights are only sought for matters which are directly pertinent to the programme in hand in this case.

#### **3.10.2 Deputy M. Tadier:**

I am mindful of the fact that we are talking about loans here rather than grants, which may affect the level of intrusion that one could reasonably expect. But does the Minister agree that just because somebody has received a loan, does not necessarily mean that if it was done with their consent, that that is commercially sensitive? Would the Minister agree that rather than just relying on pre-selected case studies, which have been successful, to then publicise as perhaps some kind of propaganda exercise - as it might be perceived - that it will be much more beneficial to ask for permission in advance, saying: "We would like to monitor your progress as a company with this loan, before we know whether it is successful or not, so that we can have more balanced approaches to looking at the success of the scheme"?

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

I think it is important to clarify these are grants, not loans. I think it is also important to clarify that we do request data from those organisations, but we are not seeking to make it public. That is the part that is not appropriate from Deputy Curtis's question. Jersey Business does seek data sharing, but not data sharing rights. We will continue to monitor the applicants, and that is part of the agreement they enter into with the grant, but that information would not be made automatically public.

[11:15]

#### **3.10.3 Deputy M. Tadier:**

I thank the Minister for the clarification; I think I am confused with another loan scheme which is operating on a 50/50 basis. I think that perhaps changes things, but given the fact that this is public money that is being given out, the question remains, what will the measurables be and the mechanisms to make sure - whether as Scrutiny or whether as just taxpayers who are seeing their money going to these companies - that the scheme is successful and that money is being spent and providing the taxpayer with good value for money?

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

While I would happily argue that that is not pertinent to the actual question that was first asked, I am happy to say that Jersey Business will work with all the organisations who apply and they will work to monitor their use of the grants and the success of the investments that they make in their businesses.

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

I understand the Minister's difficulty with data confidentiality, but he will recognise the concerns that the public and States Members have when dealing with public money; ergo, the Innovation Fund. For example - and this relates particularly to what the Deputy is asking - there are rumours, and this is not an April fool, that there is a grant going to a magic mushrooms entity. Maybe it is a sub-sector of the cannabis industry, I am not sure, but it is doing some psychedelic research. If it is true that there is a magic mushroom business or mushroom export business going on, could he give some guidance which stops short of breaking data, but just some policy guidance as to whether or not we think it is sensible for Jersey to be putting public money into magic mushrooms.

**The Bailiff:**

I am sorry, that falls ...

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

Sir, that has absolutely nothing to do with the question.

**The Bailiff:**

Thank you. I think I was going to express that view, Deputy Morel. Frankly, asking the Minister for policy is nothing really to do with data-sharing rights between Jersey business and anyone else.

**3.10.5 Deputy J. Renouf:**

I think the Minister has answered this, but I would like absolute clarity. Is it the case, because of this data sharing rights issue, that the public will not know a complete list of who has received money through this scheme at all, never mind how much money each business has got?

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

I will say, I think it is dangerous if we just continually publish lists of recipients of grants. I think that creates a really difficult situation for all Islanders, and so I do question the motivation for that. What I would say is, that is also one reason why we have a Scrutiny function. That sort of information can be passed to Scrutiny in confidence and Scrutiny can then ask questions themselves. That is one of the reasons why we have a Scrutiny function, so that confidential information can be looked over and then the public can take comfort from Scrutiny's views. I do not think it is right to go publishing the names of people because, sadly, as we have just seen from the previous Deputy speaking based on rumour, rumour does a lot of harm in this Island.

**3.10.6 Deputy J. Renouf:**

Rumour would obviously be out of the window if we had clarity and transparency. I do think that it is interesting that we will not have that information; it is not about a victimisation thing of those companies. Will he explain, therefore, how the public will know whether the money has been well-spent, when it will not be possible to publicise the names of businesses that have received it and therefore may have not used it well?

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

I would actually counter that with a question myself, to some extent. How would the public know, just by publishing the names of businesses, whether that money has been well-spent or not? All they would know is the name of the business and the amount of money they received. They would not have any information as to whether it was well spent or not.

**3.10.7 Deputy A.F. Curtis:**

I am slightly confused because the Minister approved a CXTech programme in Impact Jersey on the exact same match funding in which all recipients will be published. My question is: will the Minister, despite his current position, commit to working with Jersey Business urgently to ensure both the website and terms and conditions, in essence, seek that approval from Members that, where public money is given out, at least a level of information - which may not include the quantum - is published so that Islanders and other businesses who may not be successful at least have some awareness of the scheme?

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

No, I will not make that undertaking. What I can say is that recipient organisations will be consenting to Jersey Business, the Department for the Economy, Revenue Jersey and other administrations of the Government or States of Jersey to share data and information received from that organisation for the purposes of and in connection with the grant package they receive and those terms and conditions. I am not going to seek any further requirement for data from them than that.