

Minister for Infrastructure



Government of Jersey
Union Street | St Helier | Jersey | JE2 3DN

Deputy Hilary Jeune
Chair, Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel
By Email

27 March 2025

Dear Chair and Panel,

Closure and Redevelopment of Fort Regent

As has been discussed in previous Scrutiny hearings and recent questions in the States Assembly, the Regeneration Steering Group (RSG) has been leading on work to develop exciting new plans for the redevelopment of Fort Regent, which are due to be released for public consultation in early April.

There has been much debate – over successive political terms – to establish a viable future use for Fort Regent. I know that we are all keen to action to invest in the future of this much-loved community facility, and to bring it back into proper use for the benefit of Islanders and visitors alike. This has been the purpose of work across this Government and previous Government's.

The RSG decided that the most appropriate way to progress plans for the redevelopment of Fort Regent was to continue to use the capacity and extensive skills available to us by partnering with the States of Jersey Development Company (SoJDC). This type of work is exactly why the States Assembly created the company to enhance our public realm and means that we avoid the use of expensive consultants whilst placing a greater focus on our local requirements. I have been impressed by SoJDC's commitment to make progress with this important project, and I'm looking forward to working with them as plans continue to develop.

You will recall that the EHI Scrutiny Panel lodged a successful amendment to the draft Budget 2025, which we supported, requiring that:

"The Minister for Infrastructure and Council of Ministers will work with the States of Jersey Development Company to identify the appropriate funding and source for funding of feasibility work by no later than 31st March 2025"

I therefore write to confirm that a total of £3 million has been allocated to enabling and feasibility activities that will be led by SoJDC and drawn from the "College Gardens Fund" that is held by the company for investment in public infrastructure, as determined by the RSG.

For the Panel's information, I have also enclosed terms of reference which set out the RSG's relationship with SoJDC to deliver the first stages of this project, in their capacity as the RSG's Strategic Delivery Partner. The RSG, with the support of the Project Board comprising relevant senior officials, are providing direction and oversight of the activities undertaken by SoJDC for this project.

The over-arching objectives for SoJDC in the development of plans are to establish:

1. A financially sustainable, all-weather, family focused leisure and entertainment venue that will provide a major amenity for the local community as well as attracting visitors to the Island and enabling a wide range of sporting activities to take place.
2. A new flexible events venue capable of attracting major cultural events, entertainment and sports.
3. The refurbishment of the building and surrounding land in such a way that the Grade 1 listed building's heritage is respected and celebrated, which is to include the retention and refurbishment of the iconic Grade 2 listed roof structure.

As you are aware, a public update was issued on 17 March 2025, outlining the steps that are being taken to ensure the first phase of the project can happen:

1. Support existing users to relocate

All public sports services will be moved out of the outdated facilities and into modern, purpose-built sports venues or existing facilities across the Island. Many clubs have already relocated over the past three years.

La Petite Ecole nursery will continue operating at Fort Regent until new facilities are found for them.

2. Relocate soft play facilities

To ensure families still have access to a high-quality play area while the Fort is being redeveloped, a brand-new, fun and accessible soft play facility will be opening at the Waterfront this Summer.

3. Make the facilities safe and address existing risks

The basic infrastructure of Fort Regent is outdated, including the power supply, lighting and water systems. The building also contains asbestos so Fort Regent will have to close to protect the public while work takes place to safely regenerate the site.

4. Consult the public

On 2 April this year the States of Jersey Development Company, our delivery partner, will start a public consultation on the new vision for the Fort on behalf of the Government and will gather feedback from Islanders. This process will be similar to the recent Waterfront consultation and will enable the public to give their views on the new proposals. At the same time, plans are being prepared for the restoration of the iconic roof structure.

5. Deliver a regenerated Fort Regent

Once the Fort is fully vacated, work will start on the main structure, focusing on removing the asbestos, with works beginning in January.

Once a detailed design is agreed, a completely regenerated Fort Regent will reopen at the end of 2028.

Detailed objectives to help shape these plans will continue to be developed and refined, informed by both the outcome of the forthcoming public consultation and onward development of the

detailed financial case, which is being prepared for inclusion in the forthcoming Budget 2026-2029. This aim is consistent with the Panel's amendment to the Budget 2025, such that:

"The full redevelopment project – beyond feasibility – will require a further sustainable funding model. This model will be developed by the Minister to the extent that the necessary funding will be included in the Proposed Budget 2026-2029 to be brought to the Assembly for approval."

As you know, a private briefing with the Panel has been arranged for Friday 28 March to explain our most recent progress with the Fort, and importantly, share more detailed information about the development of proposals, including the forthcoming public consultation.

In the meantime, I am aware that a group has been formed with an objective to keep Fort Regent open. The Panel will be aware that the Fort has suffered significant under-investment into its maintenance over successive decades, which led to an earlier government's decision to begin the gradual decant of users from Fort Regent with a view to its redevelopment. I should also mention that we are experiencing increasing levels of anti-social behaviour at Fort Regent, which requires management by staff at the Fort and other agencies on occasions.

The gradual decant of services and tenants from the Fort is now nearly complete, following the delivery of new gym facilities at Springfield and pending completion of the redevelopment of Oakfield Sports Hall and opening of a new Soft Play facility at the Waterfront, later in 2025. A significant number of former users of the Fort are therefore now, or soon to be, accommodated in modern, safe facilities in both Government and private buildings elsewhere.

Jersey Property Holdings is, however, continuing to work with a small number of remaining tenants to support them in securing alternative accommodation, where this is possible. Whilst the remaining users of the Fort have known for a considerable time that they will be required to vacate by the end of 2025, a government project team is focussing efforts on the oversight and coordination of decant requirements, as we move closer to the Fort's closure.

As stated in the public update, the children's nursery can and will continue to operate safely, being physically separate from the main internal structure of the fort. The facility will remain open beyond 2025, pending suitable arrangements to ensure continuity of services whilst redevelopment activity takes place.

Whilst I appreciate why some islanders may have a desire to see Fort Regent remain open, it's important to stress that this will only serve to frustrate and delay progress to refurbish the Fort and provide a modern, updated facility. Any attempt to keep the Fort open whilst refurbishment works are carried out will significantly increase the complexity and cost of the works. This relates not only to the natural logistical difficulties that a publicly open site would present, but also to the risks inherent in keeping the building open to the public whilst asbestos removal, roof refurbishment, and works to replace the electricity substations are undertaken.

It should also be noted that, even without these refurbishment works, given the scale and complexity of the physical deterioration of Fort Regent, it means that on any given day, the Fort's closure could still be mandated due to a critical infrastructure failure or deterioration of the building's fabric to the extent that it's no longer possible to manage public safety, which must be an absolute priority.

Whilst these extensive risks are closely monitored, there is now a substantially limited ability to support their ongoing management, and insufficient funding or resources available to keep this large facility open for what is now only a very small number of users. Successive Governments have reached the same conclusion, and the current States Assembly approved the Budget for 2025-2028, which has only provided financial resources for minimum safety and security measures for an empty facility.

I do however want to assure the Panel, and Islanders, that the intention is to progress the regeneration of the Fort as quickly as possible, minimising the period the facility remains closed. Despite some commentary, I want to be clear that it is categorically not the intention to “mothball” the facility, and works to begin dealing with the asbestos will start this Autumn. It is targeted that works to regenerate the Fort and bring it back into use will be completed by the end of 2028.

I trust this assists you in understanding the current position and I look forward to continued engagement with the Panel as I, together with the RSG and our Strategic Delivery Partner, continue in earnest to take this strategically significant project forward.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy Jehan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Connétable Andy Jehan
Minister for Infrastructure