

STATES OF JERSEY



SKATEPARK AT LES QUENNEVAIS SPORTS CENTRE

Lodged au Greffe on 6th January 2021
by Senator S.W. Pallett

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

- (a) to agree that the new skatepark be located at Les Quennevais Sports Centre, St. Brelade; and
- (b) to request the Minister of Infrastructure to bring forward a formal planning application for a new skatepark at Les Quennevais Sports Centre, no later than 26th February 2021.

SENATOR S.W. PALLETT

REPORT

“This should not be a campaign about a skatepark it needs to be a campaign about ‘mental health’, we need to help people understand what skateboarding does for people, how it helps them to be themselves. We need to focus on the sports outcomes, not the sport, that will help people understand why it’s so important”

Young skateboarder – Summer 2018

On 22nd January 2020, the Government of Jersey issued a press release titled ‘Proposed location chosen for new skate park announced following public consultation’ in which it clearly stated that the location of the new skatepark would be Les Quennevais Sports Centre.

There was a larger than normal response to [the public consultation¹](#) with 1,150 Islanders taking the trouble to take part and 1,073 either agreeing or strongly agreeing that Jersey should have a skatepark. The respondents also strongly supported the conclusion of a detailed [Site Suitability Report²](#) that Les Quennevais Sports Centre was the most suitable site for the main skatepark by a majority of four to one.

Funding for the new skatepark has been approved both in the first Government Plan (GP) and in the recently updated and approved GP 2021–2024, with additional financing having been agreed with both the Jersey Development Company and the Ports of Jersey. The Jersey Skatepark Association was supportive of the preferred location and stated that “the planned site will provide the best overall experience for park users and the surrounding community” and that “Jersey is well on the way to becoming a skate-friendly island , with the facilities that the skating community deserve”.

The Skatepark Project Group, that I chaired, met regularly through 2020, in spite of the difficulties presented by Covid-19, and good progress was made in preparing a design brief, commissioning a designer for the new skatepark and carrying out initial site investigations with a view of submitting a planning application in November 2020. As far as I was concerned the project was on track to submit a planning application in 2020 with the delivery of the skatepark in 2021 until, out of the blue, I was requested by officers to consider an alternative site at South Hill, St. Helier, on the back of a desktop review that had been carried out without my knowledge or approval. The reasons given were the long-term development of Les Quennevais Sports Centre and a desire to locate the skatepark nearer to St. Helier, matters that had been considered throughout the process and dealt with in the Site Suitability Report and the comprehensive public consultation.

Out of respect for colleagues I agreed to visit the site with the project officers on 28th September 2020 after which I agreed that they could carry out a short, sharp review of South Hill to consider whether difficulties detailed in the Site Suitability Report could be overcome and whether such issues would have an impact on the financing and delivery of the project. I had serious concerns at that point over who was driving the move to an alternative site and what impact such a change in direction might have on the timeframe for delivering a project that had been given unanimous support from the

¹ [New Skatepark – Project No. 201805 – Initial Consultation Report](#)

² [New Skatepark – Project No. 201805 – Site Suitability Report](#)

Council of Ministers. To be clear, I made my concerns known to both the project officers and the Interim Director of Infrastructure, Housing and Environment at the time.

At the point I resigned as Assistant Minister at Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture with delegated responsibility for sport in November 2020, I had not received the review of South Hill as an alternative site for a new skatepark, but in reality I believed such a report would only confirm the underlying issues set out with the original Site Suitability Report and rule the site out rather than rule it in. Before I come onto the consequences of considering an alternative site for a new skatepark rather than pressing ahead at Les Quennevais Sports Centre, I think it's important to give Members some background as to why we need a new skatepark and the process that I and Government followed to deliver one.

BACKGROUND

Jersey has a long tradition in providing skateboarding facilities in the Island going back well over 40 years. I am sure some Members will remember Belle Vue Pleasure Park at Les Quennevais, that was not only the location of the very popular go-kart track, but was also the site of the Belle Vue Skatepark that opened in 1977 but closed in the early 1980s. As a sporting aside, when Belle Vue Pleasure Park was lost to housing, the States of Jersey made a commitment to re-locate the go-kart track. It was unacceptable that it took over 30 years for the States to honour that commitment with financial support for the relocated go-kart track at Sorel Point in St. John and, frankly, the provision of a modern, fit-for-purpose skatepark for our local community is beginning to have the same feel.

In 1988 Skate West opened again in Les Quennevais with some basic wooden ramps and was essentially run by interested parents until the mid-1990s. The first mini-ramp appeared in 1989 at Grouville Youth Club followed a year later with another at St. Ouen's Youth Club and then a further addition at St. Peter's Youth Club in 1994. Although a new metal ramp was provided at St. Ouen's in 1998, for a decade from the mid 1990s, Jersey did not have a main skatepark for the Island and it was only after the Channel Islands Skateboarding Association (CISA) was formed in 2002, that pressure was applied on authorities to provide a purpose built park. The culmination of the CISA campaign, run by Jake Hipwell, a talented local skateboarder of the time, was initially the "Rendezvous" skatepark built on WEB land on the Waterfront that opened in 2005 and closed 2 years later. After lobbying, the States took the decision taken to build a skatepark on the New North Quay ([P.8/2008 – Waterfront Skateboard and Youth and Community Centre](#)), a park that for many failed to live up to the expectations of the skateboarding community and is still in place. I will come onto the New North Quay skatepark shortly.

Notable events that have happened in the skateboarding and BMX community in Jersey since 2008 include Alex Coleborn (aged 17) having to leave Jersey to progress as a BMX rider in 2008 due to poor facilities locally, St. John's skatepark opening in 2012 at the Recreation Centre, some limited skating equipment being installed in the Millennium Town Park and former St. Helier Deputy, Andrew Lewis, proposing plans for a new skatepark in St. Andrew's Park that were not taken forward. That then leads us to the decision in January 2018 by the Ports of Jersey to close the skatepark at the New North Quay due to antisocial behaviour outside the skatepark itself which coincided with building work taking place on the nearby buildings which I come onto later in this report.

Maybe not all Members will be familiar with the name Alex Coleborn (it's worth searching his name on Google to see his talent) but Alex was the national champion in BMX Freestyle in 2019, won a silver medal in the World Championships in China in 2017 and is currently in the Great Britain squad preparing for the Tokyo Olympics when freestyle BMX will make its debut as an Olympic sport alongside both skateboarding and sport climbing. To quote Alex who is likely to be our sole Jersey representative at the Olympics in Tokyo –

“When I was younger BMX was never really a big thing in Jersey, so you had to make the most of what you got. In my younger years building ramps out of mud with my mates was where we had fun. I knew that I had a massive passion for the sport from the moment I picked up a bike and started messing around, but never would I have imagined it would lead me to where I am today.”

Alex now lives in Corby, Northants, near to Adrenaline Alley, the UK's largest indoor urban sports venue but is a supporter of a modern skatepark in Jersey to cater for skateboarders now and into the future.

PROCESS

The New North Quay Skatepark has nevertheless been a well-used urban sports facility for those who engage in skateboarding, BMX and scooter-riding locally. It has hosted events and has been a location for street art but since it was built in 2008 is definitely seen by the skating community as a compromise that fell well short of the original vision for a semi-covered concrete skatepark.

The New North Quay falls within the Ports of Jersey Limited (PoJL) estate and is predominantly a commercial maritime site. For some considerable time, there has been a conflict between skatepark users and heavy goods traffic that has led to issues and safety concerns. Coupled with the issues around antisocial behaviour, PoJL decided after discussion with Government that it was necessary to close the skatepark until their concerns were addressed.

Part of addressing these concerns included a need to consider relocating the skatepark at the earliest opportunity to deal with both the safety concerns at the site long term and to allow PoJL to reclaim the skatepark site for commercial purposes as contained within their business plan.

At my request a public meeting was held at the Town Hall in early February 2018 to discuss the situation and understand the views of all interested parties. Fellow States Members attended that meeting along with skateboarders, BMX riders, many young people and parents and the media. The outcome of that meeting was a need to find both an interim solution to safety concerns at the New North Quay and consider a new, long-term location for a new skatepark that if possible could be delivered by the summer of 2020 ahead of the Tokyo Olympics where skateboarding and BMX would be featured for the first time and the interest in urban sports would undoubtedly grow.

With the agreement of PoJL, the skatepark opened again shortly afterwards under a licence agreement between PoJL and EDTSC. The skatepark still operates under this licence, that sets out clear obligations for both parties, but was signed on the understanding that Government would make every effort to find an alternative site for a new skatepark to free up the New North Quay for other uses. PoJL have remained content to keep the site open for a further period on the understanding that relocation

was being progressed, but the safety issues that resulted in the skatepark being closed still exist and relocation must now be seen as a priority.

PMR REPORT

To assist in identifying a new site for a skatepark, EDTSC commissioned an [options appraisal and social case for a new skatepark³](#) through Jersey Sport and funded by PoJL. This work was carried out through 2018 by specialist consultants PMR who engaged a large number of stakeholders locally including the skateboarding, BMX and scooter community, their new representative organisation, the Jersey Skatepark Association (JSA), and many other important and interested stakeholders. The report was completed and published in November 2018.

The PMR report not only set out why a replacement skatepark was needed in Jersey, it also set out the social case for such a facility receiving evidence from the JSA, young people, parents, the Youth Service, the Children’s Commissioner, the States of Jersey Police, Jersey Sport, MIND Jersey, Public Health, the Parish of St. Helier and the Planning Department amongst others. To quote from the PMR report;

“Skateparks provide a positive impact for many on their mental health and wellbeing and provide a comfortable ‘sense of place’ and belonging for many young people. Concentrating on skills and tricks can divert negative thoughts into positive energy and fulfilment when a young person feels anxious, and they can become relaxed on a board while around others who don’t judge them. This is a huge issue in modern society affecting many young people not only in Jersey. Sports such as skateboarding and BMX can provide such a positive impact to those suffering with mental health issues.”

PMR assisted in identifying four preferred sites for a new skatepark: Jardins de la Mer, Coronation Park, Springfield Stadium and Les Quennevais Sports Centre, with Jardins de la Mer the preferred option of the JSA at that time. To ensure the project gained momentum, Growth, Housing and Environment (now Infrastructure, Housing and Environment) commissioned an internal site appraisal of the 4 preferred sites identified within the PMR report along with another 11 potential alternatives (including South Hill) where a high-quality facility could be built without unnecessary –

- disproportionate initial or long-term costs; or
- legal, planning, environmental and future development issues.

GHE SITE SUITABILITY REPORT

The resulting report was the [GHE Site Suitability Report](#) which identified Les Quennevais Sports Centre as the most suitable site for a new skatepark based on the 13 criteria that each of the sites were assessed on. The finalised report also stated that a new skatepark at this site should be complemented by improvements to existing smaller skateparks around the Island and additional smaller scale facilities focusing on St. Helier. The criteria used for assessment is listed below and Les Quennevais came out on top of all the potential sites and considered the best option for success. Although

³ [Jersey Skatepark closure – opportunity or crisis? Options appraisal and social case for a new skatepark in Jersey](#)

not within the environs of St. Helier the result of the Site Suitability Report (SSR) still had Les Quennevais as the most suitable site to deliver a new skatepark.

After reviewing both the PMR Report and the SSR and providing summary briefings to both the Connétables of St. Helier and St. Brelade, as the Assistant Minister with delegated responsibility for Sport, I accepted the recommendation from officers to proceed with Les Quennevais as the preferred site for the new skatepark. To understand that decision I think it's important to briefly look at the site suitability assessment for Les Quennevais Sports Centre as it received a higher weighted score compared with other sites. To look at each of the criteria separately:

1. Legal status – the site is owned by the States and has no covenants or leases on the land.
2. Space availability – the site identified (see the Appendix) has 4,000m² available with 2,000m² actually required for the skatepark. The overall outdoor space at Les Quennevais Sports Centre, not including the carpark and the footprint of the Centre, is approximately 137,000m² with 4,000m² being 3% of the overall site.
3. Accessibility – although not in St. Helier, the site is served by the Island's most frequent bus route (No. 15), has excellent road links and has cycle and walking tracks leading in from all directions with parking on site.
4. Planning status – the site is in the Built-up zone but is within Protected Open Space. It is currently used for sport but does not impact on the current pitches. The identified site is unlikely to harm any future development/refurbishment of the sports centre, should it take place in future.
5. Environmental Impact – these are considered to have a moderate impact and will be assessed through the planning process by noise, environmental and ecological impact statements.
6. Other project interconnectivity – there are no short, medium or long term planned developments that involve the identified site.
7. Neighbour Sensitivity – there is no residential accommodation within 50 metres of the site (closest neighbours are 400m+ away). A crime impact assessment should also be included in the planning submission.
8. Spectator facilitation – the site has open space that could facilitate spectators, has toilets on site and food outlets within the sports centre.
9. Engineering suitability – the site is flat with no contaminated soils expected. Excavated material will be sand and likely reusable with good access to the site. Drainage and services are on site.
10. Other site conflict – the proposed site does not impact on other site users and has no other specific fixed use.
11. Management and maintenance facilities – the site is managed and maintained by IHE.
12. Other facilities – There are toilets and changing facilities on site with food outlets within the sports centre.

13. Open access – The skatepark will have free and open access

To progress the project further, a draft summary business case for capital funding of £1,285 million was prepared for consideration as part of the draft Government Plan 2020–23 and a report to the Council of Ministers (COM) was prepared as an update of the project. On 8th May the COM were briefed on the progress of the project and supported both the proposals and next steps which included a Government press release. I quote the minutes from that COM meeting as follows:

“The Council commended the detailed evaluation criteria used and the thoroughness of the resulting report [SSR].

The Council unanimously supported the proposals contained in the GHE report, which (given that an out of town location was proposed) it agreed should include the refurbishment of existing facilities at St. John and Millennium Town Park plus additional facilities within the St. Helier public space. The Council also endorsed the proposal for consultation with key stakeholders including the Jersey Skatepark Association, residents of St. Brelade and users of Les Quennevais Sports Centre.”

A press release was issued on 5th June 2019 and work began to prepare the necessary public consultation.

It might also be worth noting comments from a St. Clement resident in the JEP of Friday 14th June 2019 under the heading “Skatepark plans are welcome but overdue” where the writer states:

“In so many other places around the world skateboarding and other urban sports are integrated with the structure of the community. We need to be encouraging our young people to get involved in activities. The skating community has, for far too long, had to put up with sub-standard provision.

Skateboarding is unique in the way that it attracts a whole array of creative arts. Wherever you find skaters, you will also find photographers, artists, film makers and musicians.”

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

It is only right to thank officers for the professional and comprehensive way they prepared and carried out the necessary public consultation with stakeholder groups and individuals. The consultation was held primarily in the form of an online survey but also included open evenings and one to one meetings with users that took place at Les Quennevais Sports Centre. Information boards were on display within the Centre during the consultation period and remained in place for many months after the consultation so that users and the wider public could better understand the plans for the new skate park at Les Quennevais. Posters were also displayed island-wide to engage with islanders. The consultation opened on 19th June 2019, two weeks after the SSR was published and ran until the 3rd July 2019. An [Initial Consultation Report](#) was compiled to record the results of the consultation.

States Members were invited to a briefing on 24th June 2019 at Les Quennevais Sports Centre and an open event for the public was held on the evening of 26th June 2019. Both the open evening and the online survey were responded to by both Les Quennevais residents and Islanders from around Jersey and I believe that the response to the online survey was one of the largest received for any government consultation. The online

survey received 1,150 responses showing the substantial interest in the project and provided important feedback to both officers and Ministers. The questions asked within the survey were wide ranging but provided extremely useful data to inform the future direction of the project.

To the question posed of whether Jersey should have a skatepark, 94.29% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that it should. Of those who responded to Question 4, 394 made positive or supportive comments with regards to the Les Quennevais site in particular with 122 recording a negative response or raising concerns. More specifically, 187 respondents stated they were neighbours of the Les Quennevais site which is a significant representation of those living nearby with only 61 responses overall being unsupportive of the site selection. It's important to note that 64% of all respondents said they had read the SSR which was reassuring considering the context of responses on the suitability as Les Quennevais Sports Centre as the proposed site for the new skatepark.

In terms of the open event, approximately 50 people attended the evening on 26th June 2019 including 10 to 15 nearby residents who raised several concerns primarily around antisocial behaviour, noise, parking and traffic and were generally not supportive of the proposed site. 5 to 10 nearby residents were supportive of the proposed site. A group of softball players attended and raised concerns around the possible loss of their playing area, but this area was subsequently ruled out as a potential site for the skatepark. The vast majority of sports users at Les Quennevais Sports Centre were contacted with the majority being supportive although a small number raised differing concerns including softball.

Following the closing of the consultation on 3rd July 2019 and a review of all the comments and information received during the summer and early autumn of 2019, the conclusion reached by myself and officers was that there was strong support to construct a new main skatepark facility at Les Quennevais Sports Centre supplemented by satellite facilities around the Island. Further work on identifying potential satellite sites was undertaken to consider the degree of difficulty in delivery, be it through ownership, cost or planning issues. This work resulted in a draft "St. Helier Satellite Facilities Plan" that has yet to be taken forward. It is also important to confirm that the funding for the both the main facility at Les Quennevais and the satellite sites was agreed in the Government Plan in late 2019 which meant that the project had all the necessary funding required. The overall funding agreed was £1,285 million that included contributions of £75,000 from the PoJL and £425,000 the Jersey Development Company.

CONFIRMATION OF SITE AND PROJECT BOARD

I return to where I started in this report and the press release of 22nd January 2020 (less than 12 months ago) that confirmed Les Quennevais Sports Centre as the site for the new skatepark. The decision had been made to proceed with the project and that decision had the support of myself, the EDTSC Minister Senator Farnham and most importantly, that of the Council of Ministers.

On the back of this support and to abide by the Public Finances Law, a Project Board was agreed that comprised of myself as Chair, Senator Farnham as Vice-Chair, the Connétable of St. Helier, the Director General IHE, the Director EDTSC, THE Operations Manager of the Sports Division and the Project Manager from IHE with the intention to meet quarterly but Covid-19 on the schedule.

However, progress was made through this difficult time with monthly meetings held when possible between the project officers, the Director General and myself with monthly progress reports being provided by the Project Manager. Good progress was made through 2020 including the following:

1. Preparing a draft St. Helier Satellite Facilities Plan.
2. Appointing CONSRUCTO Skatepark Architecture as the skatepark designers after a tender process.
3. Detailed consultation with key stakeholders on the design requirements.
4. Preparing Impact Assessments for a Planning Application.
5. Consulting with the Children's Commissioner and preparing a Children's Impact Assessment.
6. Complete initial ecological and ground assessments.
7. Undertake bat surveys.
8. Complete preliminary drainage design.

The work being carried out by officers, designers and third parties on the project was in my view on track up to mid-September with the aim of submitting a planning application for the new skatepark in November 2020. On 24th September 2020 I was contacted by officers who stated that they wished to consider a site for a skatepark in St. Helier as an alternative to Les Quennevais. This came out of the blue and was a bit of a shock but out of respect for colleagues, I agreed to meet with officers on 28th September to look at the South Hill site, a site that had previously been assessed and rejected.

I was informed in that meeting that a desk top review had been carried out by officers on the list of rejected sites to identify whether an alternative to Les Quennevais Sports Centre could be found. This apparently was based on concerns on the long-term development of the Sports Centre at Les Quennevais although I believe the change of heart was driven by external interference. Irrespective of who decided to initiate the desk top review and search for an alternative site, I reluctantly agreed to a short one-month review of South Hill but wrote to both the project officers and the Director General to express my concerns over the South Hill site and potential delays.

On 27th October I received an update on the feasibility study on South Hill from officers that stated that the study was complete apart from the Geological Assessment that was due for completion shortly. Suffice to say I resigned a few days later and have not been involved with the project since.

CONCLUSION

It was comments made by officers and Ministers at the Economic and International Affairs Scrutiny Panel Quarterly Hearing with the Minister for Economic Development and subsequent comments made in the media that has driven me to lodge this proposition. The impression given at this hearing was that I instigated the search for an alternative site to Les Quennevais Sports Centre when this is just not the case. The new skatepark is a Government Plan commitment and must if at all possible be delivered for Islanders in 2021. The only way that can realistically happen is to proceed with

Les Quennevais and not change track and consider an alternative site whether it be South Hill or another site. To move to another site will involve a similar degree of consultation that was carried out for Les Quennevais Sports Centre and that will undoubtedly require several months to complete. Failing to consult with all key stakeholders and the wider public would undermine the process that has been followed to date at Les Quennevais and further damage any confidence the public has in government.

To briefly comment on South Hill, this site was one of 15 sites originally assessed in the SSR which assessed Les Quennevais Sports Centre as the most suitable site for a new skatepark. Although South Hill is States-owned land with no covenants and in the Built-up zone, it is also Protected Open Space, in the Hazardous Installation Outer Safety Zone and Regeneration Zone which is likely to create problems. South Hill Park is itself a Grade 2 Listed Place and even on a good day is exposed and open to the prevailing elements. The closest toilets are situated at La Folie and there are no food or drink outlets in the vicinity. The original SSR stated that bedrock may be encountered on site and that high voltage cables are buried within the site that could have consequences on the cost of any build. The latest “uncompleted” feasibility study also commented that the stability of the rock face needed to be assessed, that there is ground contamination and that a skatepark development would have “significant impact” on the site as a Grade 2 Listed Place. The site itself only has 1,125m² of available space compared with the 2,000 m² that is required. I therefore think it’s fair to say that South Hill is not a suitable option for the new main skatepark for Jersey although it could, if necessary, accommodate a smaller satellite park.

Although I am conscious that I am bringing this proposition at a time when Covid-19 is still a major concern for the Island and indeed further afield and that the full effect of Brexit is yet to be fully understood, it’s still important that government delivers on its promises and that States Members are true to both their manifesto commitments and publicly made commitments that a new skatepark for Jersey will be provided in this political term.

The social case for replacing the skatepark on the New North Quay was made within the PMR Report and I am not going to repeat everything contained in that excellent report. I also have no intention of lecturing Members on the health benefits, both physical and mental, that good quality sports facilities can provide as these benefits have been clearly highlighted throughout the pandemic; but it is important to remember that within our Common Strategic Policy we did agree to put children first and improve Islanders’ wellbeing and mental and physical health.

As I complete this report, it has been reported in the JEP of 4th January 2021 that the Assistant Minister for EDTSC with delegated responsibility for Sport, Deputy Raymond, has issued a ‘deadline’ for the submission of a planning application for a new skatepark at Les Quennevais Sports Centre by the end of January. If this deadline is achieved, it will certainly be good news for the urban sports community of the Island and especially young people who are both in need of support and hope that life will be better after Covid-19. If not, then I hope Members will support this proposition that gives certainty to the timeline for a planning application.

Financial and manpower implications

There are no financial or manpower implications over and above the agreed funding within the Government Plan 2021–24.

APPENDIX

(a) Les Quennevais Skatepark site options

Project No:	Drawing No:	Revision:
201805	SK-001	P1

Site:	Date:	Description:
		skatepark new/revise
Growth, Housing and States of Jersey PO Box 412, Birnford House, St Helier Jersey, JE4 8LY Tel: +44(0)1534 445509 Website: www.gov.je Project Title: New Skatepark		
Drawing Title: Les Quennevais Sports Centre Proposed Site Options Site Plan		
Date:	13/12/2018	Sheet: 1 of 1
Page Size:	A3	Scale: 1:2000
Project No:	Drawing No:	Revision:
201805	SK-001	P1



(b) Selected Site



