

STATES OF JERSEY



NEGOTIATION OF PURCHASE FOR THE SITE OF THE SEASIDE CAFÉ GRÈVE DE LECQ (P.53/2023): AMENDMENT

Lodged au Greffe on 11th July 2023
by Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter
Earliest date for debate: 18th July 2023

STATES GREFFE

NEGOTIATION OF PURCHASE FOR THE SITE OF THE SEASIDE CAFÉ
GREVE DE LECQ (P.53/2023): AMENDMENT

1 PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (a) –

After the words “for a use that will be of” insert the words “environmental, cultural and social”.

2 PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (a) –

After the words “benefit to the public” insert the words “, including the option of working with partner organisations in completing the purchase and securing the future use of the site”.

3 PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (b) –

Substitute paragraph (b) with the following paragraph –

“(b) to ensure that the negotiated price represents value for money and that, prior to the transaction being presented to the States in accordance with Standing Order 168, the price has been subject to independent assessment;”.

4 PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (b) –

After paragraph (b), insert the following new paragraph –

“(c) to consider options, consulting as necessary, for enabling the Government of Jersey to be notified when properties or areas of significant value to the people of Jersey become available so that early consideration can be given to potentially acquiring them on behalf of the public.”.

DEPUTY L.K.F. STEPHENSON OF ST. MARY, ST. OUEN AND ST. PETER

Note: After this amendment, the proposition would read as follows –

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

to request the Minister for Treasury and Resources, in consultation with the Minister for Infrastructure –

- (a) to negotiate, on behalf of the States of Jersey, the purchase of the former Seaside Café and carpark site at Grève de Lecq for a use that will be of environmental, cultural and social benefit to the public, including the option of working with partner organisations in completing the purchase and securing the future use of the site;

- (b) to ensure that the negotiated price represents value for money and that, prior to the transaction being presented to the States in accordance with Standing Order 168, the price has been subject to independent assessment; and
- (c) to consider options, consulting as necessary, for enabling the Government of Jersey to be notified when properties or areas of significant value to the people of Jersey become available so that early consideration can be given to potentially acquiring them on behalf of the public.

REPORT

Background

As Deputy Farnham knows, I am supportive of the principle that the former Café Romany site and car park at Greve de Lecq should be purchased by the States and utilised for the benefit of the public. This is an objective I have been working towards since the General Election in June 2022 and, as a team of Deputies, I believe we are united in this ambition.

I am not convinced, however, that now is the optimum time for a proposition to be debated on this topic. Nevertheless, Deputy Farnham has taken a decision to lodge P.53/2023 and the matter is before the Assembly.

Given that Deputy Farnham and I (along with Deputies Moore and Gorst) have a common objective, and in view of the work undertaken to date, I am supportive of the intention of the proposition, if perhaps not the timing. I do, however, feel that the proposition can be improved, which is why I have lodged this amendment.

Current circumstances

Greve de Lecq is a special and popular part of the Island, enjoyed by generations of families from all across the Island, and by visitors. It is one of the most beautiful areas of coastline in Jersey and offers the opportunity to pursue a range of hobbies and interests, many of which are set out in Deputy Farnham's report. Indeed, the former Café Romany site was so enjoyed and valued, and such a central part of Greve de Lecq, that it has always felt like part of the public realm. Its closure has been sorely felt and has impacted greatly on the whole area. Greve de Lecq has undoubtedly lost some of its vibrancy as a consequence.

The experience of the past few years, with the site closed and now being inaccessible to the public, has clearly demonstrated the impact that would be felt were the area to be permanently cut off to Islanders. We must equally accept, however, that this is (and always has been) private land. Public access is not a right nor guaranteed.

I do not wish to see the current position effectively made permanent through the development of one, large, private residence on the site. I am concerned, more generally, at the growing "privatisation" of our coastline (often through the building of large private residences), of which this is potentially another prime example. Not all private landowners (including those operating businesses that are open to the public) adopt the open and generous approach that was demonstrated for decades on this site by the Lewis family – effectively allowing through access by anyone regardless of whether they were a patron of the business or not.

There is only one way to safeguard the former Café Romany site and to ensure this part of Greve de Lecq remains fully accessible and open for all Islanders in perpetuity – and that is through the public acquisition of the site.

Future use of the site

I am sure that a great many Islanders would support purchasing the site if only to prevent the proposed single residence development and maintain the current level of public access and amenities. Whilst I understand that view, I consider that if the States are to acquire the site, it should be in pursuit of an objective to ensure that it is utilised for greater public benefit.

To that end, I have been liaising over the past year with the Bosdet Foundation regarding the future use of the site, were it to be acquired by the States. The Bosdet Foundation see great potential to utilise this site for the public interest – maintaining a café, keeping a publicly accessible car park, and acting as a base for a range of outdoor activities in the area. This would include working with youth groups and other community organisations. The Foundation are a proven and credible partner and are willing to work with the States were the area to be acquired by the public to ensure it is utilised in the best interests of Islanders. We have observed that the site is in close proximity to Crabbé, which offers further opportunities to build on the activities already available at that facility.

I have also had contact with other relevant stakeholders in the area, who have similarly shown an interest in working together to deliver social, cultural and environmental value for Islanders at Greve de Lecq were the site to be purchased by the States.

I should stress that these discussions are ongoing, and no agreement or arrangement is in place as to how the site would be utilised. Importantly, though, it is clear that there would be numerous opportunities for making use of the site were the public to acquire it.

The Amendment

Part (a)

It is for these reasons that I am proposing part (a) is amended to ensure that the site is not simply acquired, but done so for a use that is of environmental, cultural and social benefit to the public. There is no reason why all three of these aims can't be realised in this case. Similarly, if the States support this proposal, I want it to be clear that we would need to work with partners to ensure maximum effective use of the site, and the amendment accordingly makes provision in that regard.

Part (b)

The amendment to part (b) is proposed so that the Assembly is clear that any wish to purchase the site does not mean that we will pay any price. We won't.

An acquisition on behalf of the public will need to represent good value for money – taking into account all factors (economic, environmental and cultural) that will be part of that consideration. I consider it important that independent assessments are sought as part of this process.

My ministerial colleagues Deputies Moore and Gorst and I also do not consider that a further States debate is necessarily required if this proposition (as amended) is adopted. Approval for the purchase of the site, and the basis for that purchase, will have already been given by the Assembly. Standing Order 168 then sets out the process for the

acquisition of land on behalf of the public. This is fully open, transparent and requires two-weeks' notice to be given to States Members. We consider it more appropriate for Members to be able to recall this matter for debate if they are not satisfied by the agreement that (by that stage) will have been reached, instead of mandating a further debate irrespective of the terms on which the acquisition might be made.

New part (c)

I am also proposing an additional part (c) to the proposition. My rationale for this new part (c) is because the Café Romany site does not represent the first occasion on which the States has found itself on the back foot in respect of potentially acquiring properties or areas of land that are of value to Islanders.

On occasions, we have managed to make up lost ground, but on other occasions the opportunity has passed us by entirely, and we now look on with regret at subsequent developments or loss of public amenity. I appreciate this is a delicate subject, and part (c) has therefore been drafted carefully and broadly, but I believe it is worth considering how we can avoid similar scenarios in future.

Part (c) therefore asks that thought is given to the practicalities of notifying Government on future such occasions, so that early consideration can be given to acquiring sites that are of value to the public for the long-term benefit of Islanders.

Conclusion

I hope this amendment improves and supplements the proposition. It aims to assist towards safeguarding this precious and much-loved corner of our Island, and to keeping it as part of the public realm.

I believe it is in all our interests for Greve de Lecq to be fully accessible by future generations of Islanders and visitors, for all our collective enjoyment and benefit. I ask Members to support this amendment, and to then vote in favour of the proposition.

Financial and staffing implications

Negotiations and the work relating to part c of this proposition will be undertaken using existing resources, therefore there are no financial or staff resources. Subject to a successful negotiation, further discussions will be needed with the Treasury about funding the purchase, in partnership with other stakeholders if appropriate.