

## **2.1 Senator F. du H. Le Gresley of the Minister for Planning and Environment regarding the development on the former holiday village site at Portelet Bay:**

Does the Minister consider that the fact that a developer has won national awards such as Large Development of the Year, Best Architecture - Multiple Units, Best House and Best Interior Layout should influence any assessment of the impact on our coastline of the current development of 46 apartments and 7 houses on the former holiday village site at Portelet Bay?

### **Senator F.E. Cohen (The Minister for Planning and Environment):**

Prior to my appointment, a scheme to replace the old unsightly holiday camp had been approved and was ready to start. I felt the scheme could be improved upon and urged the appointment of a leading contemporary architect combining the finest landscaping, art and architecture. The applicant commissioned Sir Richard MacCormac as architect, Robert Townshend as landscape architect and Wendy Ramshaw CBE as artist. Sir Richard is a former President of the R.I.B.A. (Royal Institute of British Architects), is the architect of the renowned Ruskin Library and of Quadrangle Oxford University and at a local level, the much-admired Jersey Archive. While I wish it were otherwise, I never had the option of returning Portelet to nature. I chose to seek to deliver a piece of bold post-modernist architecture of the highest quality instead of the approved already inferior design. Portelet, despite the fact that it is still far from complete, has already won 6 major national architectural and design awards and one major international architectural award, and I expect many more to come. We have short memories and many of us have forgotten the appearance of Portelet when the old hideous holiday camp was in situ. Importantly, the MacCormac scheme delivers a reduction in floor space over the old holiday camp of 15 per cent. At Planning, we are used to criticism during the construction phase of significant buildings. There was criticism of the new El Tico when it was shrouded in scaffolding but as soon as the building was unveiled, Islanders delighted in its design. We endured criticism of the Ogier building when shrouded in scaffolding, and it is a now much admired environmental exemplar and a finalist in a major R.I.B.A. award. The present scaffolding at Portelet gives the appearance of a single construction twice the mass of the actual buildings. The architecture cannot even be seen. The Townshend landscaping has not even begun and the Ramshaw gates are not in situ. I urge critics to wait until they see the completed scheme.

### **2.1.1 Senator F. du H. Le Gresley:**

A supplementary please. In 2009, Sky Travel included Portelet Bay in its list of top 10 most beautiful beaches in the world, the only European beach to make that list. Does the Minister agree that by approving this development on the Portelet Headland, he has failed in his responsibilities as Minister for Environment to protect this unique area of natural beauty?

### **Senator F.E. Cohen:**

No, I most certainly do not. To reiterate, a consent had been given a long time before my appointment as Minister. It was ready to start. The scheme, I believe, was an inferior scheme and the current scheme by Sir Richard MacCormac is very much better.

### **2.1.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour:**

Notwithstanding the apparent excellence of the architect, could the Minister say how his department assesses impact on the coastline of developments that are placed around the coast?

**Senator F.E. Cohen:**

We assess the impact with the greatest care. However, in the case of Portelet, to reiterate yet again, we were not in a position of being able to reassess whether or not a consent should or should not be given. A consent was in place and the developer was ready to start.

**2.1.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisssier:**

Was the consent given for a particular height?

**Senator F.E. Cohen:**

The consent was given for a particular series of buildings. That would have included buildings of a particular height and, to point to the particular issue of height in relation to Portelet, I would stress that the curvilinear houses behind the scheme are nothing to do with the MacCormac scheme and pre-date my appointment.

[9:45]

**2.1.4 Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier:**

Notwithstanding the merits of the scheme, in these days of high local unemployment, will the Minister consult with the Minister for Economic Development to ascertain the source of the workforce, which is to work on the Portelet scheme to ensure that it is local workers and not imported workers?

**The Bailiff:**

I am sorry, Deputy, I think that is too far off the original question. [Aside] Deputy Le Fondré.

**2.1.5 Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré of St. Lawrence:**

The Minister has stated that obviously there was an existing consent in place when he, as it were, inherited the permission and I have become aware of some details of that scheme. Would the Minister be prepared to perhaps circulate to Members some photographs of the previous scheme and the current scheme in order for them to assess the impact?

**Senator F.E. Cohen:**

I am more than happy to distribute photographs of Portelet with the original holiday camp, which of course is most unsightly, the previous scheme and the latest scheme by Sir Richard MacCormac. However, it is all rather too late because the Sir Richard MacCormac scheme is under construction and will be completed, I assume, later this year.

**2.1.6 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:**

In his impressive opening monologue, the Minister remarkably failed to answer the question that was put to him, so I will ask it again, which is essentially does the fact that a developer who has been awarded certain national awards, should that influence any assessment of the impact on our coastline of these proposed apartments and houses?

**Senator F.E. Cohen:**

I am sorry if Members thought that I had not answered the question. I thought that I had made it clear that the awards are the result of the architecture. They were not the cause of the consent.

**The Bailiff:**

Very well. Do you wish the final question, Senator Le Gresley?

**2.1.7 Senator F. du H. Le Gresley:**

Yes, Sir. Can the Minister give us any reassurance that with the new Island Plan, developments of this scale on our coastline will never be allowed again?

**Senator F.E. Cohen:**

I think I know what the Senator is getting at, and I need to be very careful in this particular area. All I can say is that much of the coastline is included in the new Island Plan as a new national park, but of course it is up to Members of this House whether they wish to approve or not the proposals of the Island Plan.