

2.9 Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the maintenance of Liberation Square: 1(409)

What action, if any, is the Minister taking to repair and maintain Liberation Square?

Deputy E.J. Noel of St. Lawrence (The Minister for Infrastructure):

Firstly, may I say that I agree that Liberation Square does require some attention to improve the visual appearance and enhance the area. The square is highly utilised by both visitors and Islanders alike and we want to ensure that this important public space continues to be used and enjoyed. Maintenance of the square is the responsibility of my department, the Department for Infrastructure, in conjunction with the Parish of St. Helier who, I believe, are responsible for cleaning all public space areas within the ring road. The department undertakes a maintenance regime on the square. However, I believe that there is scope to improve the square and make it a better place to be enjoyed by Islanders and visitors alike and I am working with the Constable to look at the longer term plans for the square, including public realm areas that do not belong to my department, such as the Weighbridge Square and, indeed, the area around the Steam Clock. I can advise Members and, more importantly, the public that I have instructed that a site condition survey be undertaken which will consider works that need to be undertaken from a structural, mechanical and electrical perspective, and this has not been done for a number of years. This survey will be completed by the end of the summer and will provide a detailed list of prioritised works to be undertaken over the remainder of the year and into 2018. While this is happening we will, with the Parish, review the public area and the existing square design to increase the public usability on a day-to-day basis and for such important events as Liberation Day.

2.9.1 Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I thank the Minister for his comprehensive reply. I am referring, of course, obviously, to our heritage which, yearly, we have on Liberation Day, which is based in Liberation Square, as the Minister has just said. It is falling into disrepair, so I really appreciate the fact that it is being repaired. It is also a focal point for tourists coming over. I also note that West Centre is in need of T.L.C. (tender loving care) and also, dare I mention the Steam Clock, love it or hate it, I have done an appraisal and in my personal, humble opinion, it is fast approaching being beyond economic repair.

The Deputy Bailiff:

I wonder, Deputy, is there a question coming?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

There is a question coming up right away, Sir.

The Deputy Bailiff:

I wonder if it could come straight away, please.

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

The question is: will the Minister agree to work with other agencies - I know that the Ports of Jersey are responsible for the Steam Clock now - and Jersey Heritage, and the Parish, to maintain our Island's heritage? Thank you.

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I am afraid that Deputy Lewis obviously was not listening to my first answer. I said that I am working with the Parish and I am sure the Parish and I will be also working with the 2 other

landowners of the adjacent public spaces, being the Jersey Development Company and Ports of Jersey.

2.9.2 Deputy J.A. Hilton of St. Helier:

We have had a long and convoluted response to Deputy Lewis's question. It is not rocket science to get somebody down to Liberation Square with a steam cleaner. Surely, between the Department for Infrastructure and the Parish of St. Helier, they can do that, within a matter of hours, I would have thought. Does he not agree with me?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

Absolutely. Obviously, the frequency of that activity, that cleaning, taking place, is something that we have to discuss with the Parish of St. Helier.

2.9.3 Deputy S.M. Wickenden of St. Helier:

Could the Minister please confirm that access to the area, to be able steam clean it, is through Property Holdings that look after it, and would he ask his officers to allow the Parish to have a key so they can access it when they require?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I heard about this this morning, so I have checked with my department and I believe that the Parish is provided with keys. Unfortunately, it appears that when the locks were changed, recently, they did not have a key for access. There is plenty of access for those contractors working to maintain the square to do their work.

2.9.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Following the large-scale outsourcing from his department, does the Minister have enough staff remaining in his department under his control to increase the frequency of such cleaning in this particular area?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

We have not done the cleaning of the inner ring road for a number of years now. It is covered by an S.L.A. (Service Level Agreement) with the Parish of St. Helier and I do not believe that any of our direct labour staff, certainly to my knowledge, have been involved in maintaining that particular area for a considerable amount of time.

2.9.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is it not the case - or can the Minister assure Members that it is not the case - that since he has reduced his own workforce, jobs are not getting done around inside the ring road and therefore the demand on Parish workers has increased, because of his outsourcing?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I can only repeat again: the cleaning within the ring road has been subject to an S.L.A. with the Parish of St. Helier for a number of years now.

2.9.6 Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier:

I would like to thank the Minister for his initial answer, which I did not think was convoluted at all. Would he not agree with me that, between his department and the Parish, we are addressing all issues around the cleanliness of our public spaces and, in particular, does he share my view that steam cleaning does raise a number of problems, including it affects the pointing in the Royal Square, for example. It does push harmful substances into the air. We need to look at a low-tech solution, such as is practised in many European towns, where you

simply wash your precincts every day if you can. Is it not agreed that more pavement washing would be a good thing throughout St. Helier?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I agree with much of what the Constable has said, and I would really add to that that it is quite nonsensical that at the moment we have effectively 3 different bodies looking after one area and it would make sense, as I have already indicated, to work with the Parish for those particular squares to be transferred across to the Parish for them to co-ordinate and look after them in the round, and in a joined-up way.

2.9.7 Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I appreciate Deputy Southern's point. It is a shame that at Glencoe tomorrow another tranche of former T.T.S. (Transport and Technical Services) equipment is being sold off, as the staff are no longer there. I am aware of the S.L.A. with the Constable of St. Helier, because I signed it when I was at T.T.S. Yes, I do appreciate the Minister's reply, and I urge him to step up all his efforts to maintain the Island's assets as soon as possible. Thank you.

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I am not sure if there is actually a question there.

The Deputy Bailiff:

There was not. "Does he not agree?"

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I agree that we need to work in partnership with the Parishes and in the case of St. Helier we are doing so on a daily basis.

[10:45]