

2020.06.02

14 Deputy J.M. Maçon of the Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture regarding funding for cultural and arts organisations (OQ.132/2020):

Will the Assistant Minister advise whether any discussions have been held with cultural organisations such as Jersey Heritage, Jersey Opera House and the Jersey Arts Centre; if so, will he confirm which ones his department has met - stating when and how often - and whether financial aid is to be provided to assist them; and if any of this activity has not occurred, will he explain why not? Thank you.

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade (Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture):

I thank the Deputy for his question and interest. My department has been in regular contact with Jersey Heritage, Jersey Arts Centre and Jersey Opera House as well as Arthouse Jersey and since the lockdown discussions have increased significantly, in some cases 2 or 3 times a week. The department has requested that all of those organisations provide updated financial forecasts to understand if any will require top-up funding due to the pandemic. For example, Jersey Heritage has provided some provisional forecasts and we are waiting to see some more detailed forecasts about different scenarios to see what kind of intervention they may need in addition to their core funding. That is a general answer. I cannot provide all the dates but if the Deputy wanted those, clearly I could provide that in a written form.

3.14.1 Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Yes, I would appreciate that detail, but that can come in time, that is fine. Given that we know, for example, indoor venues will be the longest that will take to recover operations into the future, what priority does the Minister want to give to protecting the cultural sector so that we have an offering after this crisis?

[11:30]

Deputy M. Tadier:

I think that the cultural sector and heritage and arts in Jersey are going to be critical to the recovery. Clearly, depending on the type of provision that they make in society, there will be different ways in which they might need to be helped or affected. I will give one example. The Jersey Opera House, for example, is probably going to find it very difficult given that many bookings rely on a long period of notice and their season is pretty much not going to go ahead but we will use that as an opportunity to invest in the infrastructure of the Opera House, which needs working on. Other groups clearly can manage to do lots of productions perhaps online and with shorter notice. So it will be a case of tailoring their production, depending on their *modus operandi*.

3.14.2 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Would the Assistant Minister join me in congratulating the arts organisations and heritage organisations mentioned in the question, notwithstanding the economic difficulties, they have all managed to bring together a great deal of cultural offerings for not only local people but also further afield, adapting their programmes and using a great deal of innovation and digital platforms. Will he repledge his support that as they do this that he will support all their efforts to keep local people, particularly arts and crafts people, supported by these organisations?

Deputy M. Tadier:

I thank the Constable for his question and I do certainly echo his sentiment. I would have tried to wangle a tribute in anyway but I am glad I do not have to do it unsolicited. It is clear that all of those organisations, despite the challenges provided by the pandemic, have kept going and found innovative ways to provide cultural input, whether it is through heritage, the arts, and they have done some great things online. I think they clearly have been creative and I would encourage Members to follow them on social media and give them all of our support as an Assembly.

3.14.3 Deputy J.M. Maçon:

I welcome the response of the Assistant Minister. He mentioned, and quite rightly so, that looking to upgrade and protect the infrastructure in the cultural sector is something that should be prioritised, particularly with capital projects. Would he agree with me that a fast-track process through the planning system would be one of the best ways in order to help in this area?

Deputy M. Tadier:

That is a little bit niche for my area of expertise but I think clearly planning is really important, and due process too. I think it is more fundamental than that. What we need to do, whether it is to do with infrastructure or whether it is to do with the intangible support that we give to arts, culture and heritage in Jersey, this Assembly needs to be unwavering in the support that it showed only perhaps a year or 2 ago when it committed to proper funding for those sectors and it is going to be even more critical, whether it is to do with planning matters or to do with how we support them, that support remains unwavering and that we do not be tempted to cut any funding to them as a temporary and short-term gain because it will be to our detriment as an Island culturally in the long term.