

20.10.20

2 Connétable J.E. Le Maistre of Grouville of the Chief Minister regarding the Jersey Celtic Coin Hoard (OQ.270/2020):

Will the Chief Minister confirm whether the “finders” of the Jersey Celtic coin hoard have received any reward from the States and, if not, when will any such payment be made?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré (The Chief Minister):

Once discovered, as is usual under customary law, the Crown claimed ownership of the Celtic coin hoard. Following an initial valuation, the States entered into an agreement with the Crown and paid them £737,808 towards the hoard based on a first valuation. Of this, £250,000 was paid to Jersey Heritage for the restoration. The Crown also entered into an agreement to recognise the contribution of the finders and landowner and that is a matter between the Crown and the finders/landowner. However, following various processes and valuations, the Crown has only recently formalised a proposed offer with a view to the Government finally securing the hoard to the Island, and this matter is shortly to come to the Council of Ministers for discussion.

4.2.1 The Connétable of Grouville:

I was aware that a small proportion of the value of the fund had been paid to the finders. The Celtic coin hoard was discovered in 2012, some 8 years ago, and it was agreed at the time that the find would be treated in the same way as trove is treated in the U.K. (United Kingdom). This would provide a reward to those who were involved in the find to the value of that find. Is the Council of Ministers committed to buying the hoard at market value and has it set funds aside to do so?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

Certainly from my perspective it would be an absolute tragedy for the Island not to buy the hoard and, on that basis, for the Government to buy the hoard on behalf of Islanders. I am not looking at the constraints we obviously face at the moment, I am looking over the whole long term on the basis it is the biggest Celtic coin find in Europe ever to date. In terms of value, that, I believe, has been one of the discussions that is going around because of its somewhat unique nature and size is how it gets valued. I believe, I am waiting for the latest updates, that that has in some shape or form been resolved and, as I said, I am waiting for that information to be brought to me and then obviously it will be coming up to the Council of Ministers, I am expecting, in the quite near future.

4.2.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Would the Chief Minister confirm that there is nothing under Jersey law that requires us to give any money to the finders who have already had some money and also that there is nothing to stop the Crown, who currently own the trove, just gifting it to the Island of Jersey?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

The latter I cannot confirm because that would be a matter of law and I am not that sighted on the law. What I can say, there is not a specific law to set out essentially what happens next. But the Crown said it wants to act in the spirit of what is the U.K. law, which is the U.K. Treasure Act, and that is to make the hoard available for public enjoyment through ultimately Jersey Heritage but also to recognise the part played by the finders and the landowners by passing on funds by way of a reward. That is not only because of acting appropriately in the interests of the people who discovered it but also because if one does it and does it properly, then future finders of any other treasures, for want of a better expression, on the Island are therefore encouraged to report the finds

because they are dealt with responsibly. So, Deputy Tadier's approach, I would have to say, would not be one I would condone because essentially it would not encourage anybody in the future to act responsibly as these finders have done all the way through.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can I ask clarification? I have not suggested any way forward, I have simply asked the Chief Minister a question. It is wrong of him to infer anything from what I ...

The Bailiff:

I am afraid, no, Deputy, you cannot make a point of clarification. I was going to give you the right to ask a supplemental question.

4.2.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

I can ask that, if you would like. Does the Chief Minister agree that I have not prescribed any particular way forward, I was just asking a question and it is wrong of him to infer any ...

The Bailiff:

Deputy, please do not comment on it. Does the Chief Minister accept that you were only asking about the position and not suggesting a way forward?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

If the Deputy is saying he was not inferring a way forward, it was just suggesting that that was an option of a variety of options, then I accept the comment.

4.2.4 The Connétable of Grouville:

This is quite a simple matter, it really just requires decisions, albeit there is money involved. Will the Chief Minister commit to getting this item on the Council of Ministers' agenda shortly and get the matter sorted before the year end?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

I will absolutely commit to getting it on to the agenda shortly. Whether that is just before the year end or just after the year end, I cannot commit to that. I would ideally like it before the year end, absolutely. It does come down to ... I know there has been a lot of work behind the scenes, I know there have been a variety of valuations. I did see an update report within about the last 4 weeks and I am expecting it to be on to the Council of Ministers' agenda in the next few weeks. But the reason I am caveating that response is I gather there are always some technical issues that come out of this and I am not aware if they have all yet been resolved.