

2024.06.11

3.14 Deputy J. Renouf of the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development regarding funding for Bergerac (OQ.116/2024)

Will the Minister provide an update on plans to offer a funding package to support the filming of the “Bergerac” reboot in Jersey?

Deputy K.F. Morel (The Minister for Sustainable Economic Development):

Following negotiations by Government and Visit Jersey with the producers of the “Bergerac” reboot, I can confirm that Government has provided a letter of intent to provide funding for the project. Negotiations are currently ongoing and therefore subject to commercial sensitivity but terms currently include items such as a grant to be paid against independently-audited spend on-Island during the production process, thereby supporting local businesses, a requirement for the production to train a number of local apprentices in key areas of production, and benefits from worldwide distribution in perpetuity.

3.14.1 Deputy J. Renouf:

I thank the Minister for the answer. Can he say roughly how much that support will total and will he say where it is coming from and, in particular, will it be coming from the 1 per cent for Arts, Heritage and Culture?

[11:15]

Deputy K.F. Morel:

It is again difficult. The overall funding depends on which way you want to look at it because we will be providing, as I said, a grant which will only be paid after the fact, so the grant will only be paid after independently-audited accounts showing on-Island spend have been provided. It will also be providing funding which will be paid back later on and so, as a result, it is not all grant funding; some of this will be in the form of monies that will be repaid later on. At the moment, as a result of that, I prefer to wait until the final contracts have been signed before announcing exactly how much it is going to be.

Deputy J. Renouf:

The second half of my question was where the money was coming from.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Yes, the source of funding and the 1 per cent.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

The source of funding will be from a variety of sources but including my budgets and including Visit Jersey budgets as well. When I say “my budgets”, I mean the Department for the Economy budgets.

3.14.2 Deputy H.L. Jeune:

How will the Minister approach similar requests for support for funding in the future? Is there a framework by which such requests will be judged?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

A very important question. This work, and work on other film productions that we have been speaking about helping to fund, is being used as a catalyst to ultimately create a screen

commission or a film commission in the Island so that there will be a place and a body that has a framework within which it will then decide what films and what productions should be funded and in which way. This is a method which has been incredibly successful in other jurisdictions, not least Northern Ireland where their film commission has had huge success over the past few years. So ultimately all of this work is to lead to the establishment of a film commission which will create a framework for proper funding in future.

3.14.3 Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I am not sure that it was completely answered that Deputy Renouf had asked about. Would this fall under the 1 per cent for Arts, Heritage and Culture? Would this kind of funding that would sit under this framework, would that then come under this 1 per cent that goes to Arts, Heritage and Culture within the budget?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

I think certainly some of it likely will. Whether all of it will is what is difficult to say, so I believe that some of the 1 per cent will be used in this way. Possibly all of it may be funded through the 1 per cent but equally it may be that other sources are used as well.

3.14.4 The Connétable of St. Saviour:

I did have the privilege of working on the original series of “Bergerac” for 10 years in the 1980s. I was of course a very young boy at the time but obviously since we have had some various groups trying to get funding; some good, some not so. I think the Minister may have answered the question I was going to ask which was: does the Minister believe that for security reasons the money promised should be held on-Island to pay for things like hotels and such like, thereby keeping the money on-Island, supporting local industry and promoting the local economy?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Yes, and certainly we have tried to learn from previous problems with film funding. One of the things I would say is quite sad is that the problems we had perhaps back in 2008, for instance, have really cast a long shadow and I think it is time for us to come out from without that shadow because films, and not just films, TV series, et cetera, being created in Jersey I think will have a huge beneficial impact to the economy in many different ways, including the visitor economy but also providing careers for young people, alternative careers, which I think is absolutely vital. I can assure the Connétable that as for the grant funding aspect of this, the sole intention is to pay that money after production and only against independently-audited accounts which show that spend in Jersey precisely, in hotels, local retailers, all the many different businesses; maybe electrical businesses, carpentry businesses involved as well. What we are trying to do is ensure that we do not fall into the traps that were fallen into in 2008, so it will only be paid after the fact.

3.14.5 Deputy J. Renouf:

I congratulate the Minister; I am very encouraged to hear the news about the potential film fund. Will he publish the cost-benefit analysis that I presume has been done in terms of justifying the funding for the “Bergerac” reboot? In advance of that, can he give us any information on the success criteria by which we will know if the investment in “Bergerac” was worth it from the economic point of view?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

I cannot commit to providing that information at the moment because it is quite possible that that information will be commercially sensitive but I will absolutely try to maintain

communication with the Assembly so people understand how successful or not this funding has been. Of course, it does take time so one of the areas we really do hope to see an impact is an increase in the visitor economy, more people visiting Jersey as a result. That may take one, 2 or 3 years to reach full fruition, and we need to be prepared for that.