

QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICES COMMITTEE ON TUESDAY, 13th MAY 2003 BY THE DEPUTY OF ST. JOHN

Question 1

Would the President inform members whether the level pavement in the Royal Square connected to the new entrance podium is to be the means of disabled access to the building, and, if so, what safety precautions are to be put in place in this area?

Answer

The existing pavement referred to has been extended up to the main public entrance with the podium parapet walls protecting the greatest difference in level and allowing the new flights of steps to be incorporated. These steps have yet to be altered by the Contractor to comply with the design drawings. The existing terrace steps have been extended along with the existing pavement to meet the podium parapet wall.

Clarification on precisely what the Deputy of St John meant by “safety precautions” was sought on Thursday 8th May 2003. However, there was no reply to the telephone call made by the Director of Architecture. It has been assumed this may be a reference to the perceived risk of a wheelchair user approaching the main public entrance via the pavement which at the narrowest point is 1.5 metres wide. No other barrier in addition to the podium parapet has been envisaged. The visual intrusion, and inconvenience to the public of protecting the terraced steps with a balustrading will be readily appreciated by Members.

Question 2

Will the President give members an assurance that the building will be re-assessed for minimum disabled access standards following completion of the refurbishment works of Phase I and that all Building Bye-laws have been complied with during the project, particularly in relation to the provision of stairs, ramps, protective barriers, induction loops and assistance bells, and if not, state the reasons why?

Answer

There is no Bye-Law requirement to address the issues raised by the Deputy regarding “minimum disabled access standards” due to the fact that it is an existing building. The criterion adopted by the Building Control Officers is that any alteration should not make an existing condition worse. However, as was explained in the response to the questions raised on 29th April 2003 by the Deputy, the aim was to incorporate as many recommendations made by the Centre for Accessible Environments in their report, within the constraints of the budget and the practicalities of working in a building listed as a Site of Special Interest.

It had not been anticipated that the Centre of Accessible Environments would be invited to reassess what has been implemented as this would incur additional cost and would simply indicate which items, from their original schedule, had been carried out and which had not.

With regard to the specific building elements listed by the Deputy, I confirm the following:

- (a) all new internal stairs are designed to comply with the Bye-Laws;
- (b) wherever possible ramps have been installed where there are existing changes in level on main circulation routes. Due to physical constraints one short ramp on the ground floor exceeds the maximum recommended gradient;
- (c) protective barriers, where required by the Bye-Laws, have been installed generally to a design to match the existing handrails and balustrading within the building;

- (d) induction loops, to assist those with hearing difficulties and who wear a hearing aid, have been installed in the two largest areas open to the public, for both users and observers ie., the States Chamber and the Royal Court; and,
- (e) assistance bells or alarm call pull cords have been incorporated within each disabled toilet. No other assistance bells have been included.