

2.1 Deputy F.J. Hill of St. Martin of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding the refitting of historic buildings:

Would the Minister inform Members, how many historic buildings are being refitted by the Jersey Heritage Trust for letting purposes and whether any have proved unsuitable for this purpose?

Senator M.E. Vibert (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

A total of 10 historic buildings will have been refitted by the Jersey Heritage Trust for letting purposes when phase 2 of the project is completed at the end of 2007. I understand from the Heritage Trust that these were selected from a total of 30 properties listed as potentially suitable. All are considered suitable for letting, although with regard to the more isolated offshore towers special safety arrangements will need to be put in place.

2.1.1 Deputy A.E. Pryke of Trinity:

One of those places I understand is Fort Leicester down at Bouley Bay and Islanders have donated benches which have been placed around there, thus enabling people to enjoy, at their leisure, this historic fort and obviously its beautiful coastal scenery. Will the Minister inform the House if the public will still have access to this area during the summer months?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I will have to discover the detail of the benches around the fort. I was not informed that was going to be a question and I am afraid I have not got that detail at the moment. Of course the Jersey Heritage Trust, if Members would care to contact them direct, will have that detail but if they prefer me to find out I am quite willing to do so, Sir.

2.1.2 The Deputy of St. Martin:

I was going to ask something in similar vein. All the properties which are owned by the public will now be let out, from what I can understand of the motive behind. It is obviously good that these properties are utilised and we are getting some revenue. However, the downside is they are then lost to the public. I would ask the Minister, will this apply to all those buildings which are going to be refitted? Will that mean that the public will no longer have access to them?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

The public did not have access to a number of the buildings anyway because they were closed off. In fact they were in poor need of repair. The whole purpose of this initiative, as the Deputy referred to, is to bring them back into public use, albeit for letting; and also to ensure that their fabric is maintained. Again, if the Deputy can contact the Jersey Heritage Trust, they have the details on this. In fact, they are working very closely with Economic Development on this and Transport and Technical Services. My Ministry is responsible for the Jersey Heritage Trust but in this case the Jersey Heritage Trust is working with other Ministries on this project.

2.1.3 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

Could the Minister assure me that a cost benefit analysis has been carried out on this exercise? I am particularly concerned about some of the further forts, such as the L'Etacquerel Fort - the one at Bouley Bay. I cannot imagine they are on main drains. Presumably, they have to be in order for them to be let out. The expense of that, presumably, has been accounted for. Could the Minister also suggest whether any extra expenditure will arise from letting out places like Seymour Tower and La Rocco Tower and will rubbish disposal facilities have to be provided? What is the situation?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Yes, Sir, there have been a cost benefit analysis and all those issues have been taken into account.

2.1.4 Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

Would the Minister agree that this is in fact a fantastic project that ensures that all the revenue that is going to be coming from these properties goes back into the restoration of them? Is he also aware that, as far as Fort Leicester is concerned - the first property - it is completely booked out for the rest of the year and more than that we are looking forward to a *Times* journalist having spent the weekend over Easter. Does he agree? **[Laughter]**

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I thank my fellow Minister. I did say in a previous answer that Jersey Heritage Trust were working very closely with Economic Development on this issue and you have just heard how closely they are working. I confirm everything the Minister has said.

2.1.5 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

I wonder if the Minister can assure us he is not getting special dispensations from planning departments and other areas because it seems to me that the general public, if they wanted to bring one of these properties into letting the usage, it would take them several years and an awful lot of money?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

No, Sir, and in fact very stringent guidelines are being adhered to. Planning is to set up an Historic Fortifications Review Group. Very close context is being paid to ensure that the historic fabric of the building is not damaged and that everything is done in complete adherence to the planning laws that apply. In fact, if anything, we are facing more stringent planning guidelines than if it was done in any other way. So, I can reassure the Deputy on that point and every one of the buildings is being looked at by the Historic Fortifications Review Group set up under Planning.