

2.16 Deputy S. Power of St. Brelade of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services regarding the identification of sufficient alternative car parking space prior to redevelopment of the Esplanade car park site:

In view of the importance of the Esplanade car park to commuters coming in from the 5 western parishes and its role in reducing traffic congestion in the central town area due to its location, would the Minister confirm that sufficient car parking to replace the spaces in this Esplanade car park will be identified before any redevelopment of the site starts?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye (The Minister for Transport and Technical Services):

I thank the Deputy for his question and I can confirm that discussions have been in hand with W.E.B. (Waterfront Enterprise Board) for some time concerning the redevelopment of the Esplanade car park to ensure that the existing public parking contained on the site is included in any redevelopment plan. During the construction period, options for phasing the building works have been investigated with W.E.B., thereby retaining a portion of the existing surface of the car park for public parking. Any displaced drivers will be accommodated in Pier Road and Sand Street multi-storey car parks which have spare capacity.

2.16.1 Deputy J.A. Hilton of St. Helier:

Will the Minister confirm that the £15 million set aside in the Car Park Trading Account to provide car parking in the Gas Place area will not be used to offset the loss of public car parking to privatisation or otherwise elsewhere in St. Helier?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I am afraid I am not in a position to confirm anything at this stage because, as I am sure the Deputy may understand, we are about to undertake a £100,000 review and report of car parking throughout the whole of St. Helier. Therefore, it would be rather remiss of me to anticipate what the content of that report may be and what recommendations it may make.

2.16.2 Deputy S. Power:

Can the Minister assure the Assembly that the replacement car park that will be on the same site on the Esplanade will remain under the management of his department and it will not become a privately owned car park or a car park under private management?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I am not in a position to confirm that at this time, Sir. However, I do understand that the intention is to develop a car park that is substantially larger than the existing car park on one or more floors and I anticipate that provision for car parking when the site is finally developed will be much greater than it is now. As to who will be running the car park, that is a matter to be decided.

2.16.3 Deputy I.J. Gorst of St. Clement:

The Minister has just told us that he will be undertaking a review of car parking in town and that review is going to cost £100,000. Could he explain to us how they have come to that cost basis?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I do not know if the review will cost £100,000 or not but that is the amount of money that has been set aside. I am sure it has been set aside very sensibly because a decision was taken by the former President of Environment and Planning and not myself. As I know he was also a member of the former Finance Committee, I am sure he got his sums right.

2.16.4 Connétable K.A. Le Brun of St. Mary:

Could I ask the Deputy how many car parking spaces there are in that car park as one of the questions? Because having commuted for many years down St. Peter's Valley and having seen the hold-ups there were years ago before the car park became available, a lot of the people - and myself included - were queuing from Tesson Mill during the proceedings and, certainly, as soon as it came into being it relieved the congestion completely. Going on from what he just said as well before, it is rather disturbing to hear that he is saying that it would use up a vast amount of the Sand Street car park...

The Bailiff:

Connétable, this is becoming a speech.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Oh, sorry, Sir. Yes, my apologies. It is just that having said that, the Sand Street car park was a very short-term one and therefore the Esplanade is a long-term one. What would he do about making sure there is long-term car parking and not utilising the short-term one and would he not agree that it would not be beneficial for the town traders not to have their short-term car park?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

The Constable covers a number of interesting points. I regret to say that as a regular user of public transport as opposed to being a regular user of our car parks I cannot give him, off the top of my head, a precise figure for the number of car parking spaces in the Esplanade car park but I am very happy to look into that matter and give him a precise figure as soon as I can have it. But I would suggest it is probably in the region of 450 or so. He is quite right to point out that there is a difference between the 2 multi-storey car parks. Sand Street is more of a shopper's car park and Pier Road is obviously for more long-stay commuters. There is very substantial space available at Pier Road but I can assure the Connétable and Members of the House that before any work starts on redeveloping the Esplanade car park we will look at the matter in considerable detail to ensure that no commuters or shoppers are going to be inconvenienced in terms of the parking provision required in that area of St. Helier.

2.16.5 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

In light of the answer to my previous question I am going to press the Minister on this. It has always been my understanding that the £15 million had been set aside in the Car Park Trading Account, probably since the late 1990s. I understand that there is a car parking strategy being carried out at the present time but I want the Minister's assurance that that money that has been set aside for the last 7 to 8 years will remain earmarked to provide a car parking provision in the Gas Place area.

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

Well, I am slightly puzzled if the Deputy has an understanding but all I can say is that I am not in a position to give her an assurance at this time and I will look into the matter.

2.16.6 Deputy S. Power:

Is the Minister aware that in the 5 western parishes about 1,100 new units of accommodation are due for completion in the next 12 months? The provision of car parking and any demolition of car parking is a serious issue. Can the Minister come back to this Assembly as soon as possible and give us a definitive statement on where he is with negotiations with W.E.B?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

Yes, Sir, I will return to the House with a statement on where we are with continuing negotiations with the Waterfront Enterprise Board as soon as I am able to clarify where we are in negotiations with the Waterfront Enterprise Board.