

2.2 Senator L. Norman of the Minister for Planning and Environment regarding when the report required consequent upon the adoption by the States in January 2005 of ‘Sites of Special Interest and Buildings of Local Interest: financial implications’ (P.166/2004) will be published:

Sites of Special Interest and Buildings of Local Interest: financial implications, (P.166/2004), which was adopted by the States in January 2005, requested the former Planning and Environment Committee, in consultation with the former Finance and Economics Committee, to research and report to the States within 6 months on the additional financial burden placed upon the owners of S.S.I.s and B.L.I.s. Will the Minister state when that report will be published?

Senator F.E. Cohen (The Minister for Planning and Environment):

Sir, the Committee of the day accepted the proposition because it recognised the desirability of undertaking such a review. However, the work was not undertaken because the department did not have the resources to undertake it. In July 2005, the department lost the senior member of staff in the Historic Building Section, leaving only one officer. The period has coincided with a heavy workload in historic buildings applications, principally related to the restoration work at Mont Orgueil. Accordingly, the department concentrated on its statutory obligations at the expense of other matters. However, we are presently advertising to fill the senior post and I am endeavouring to appoint consultants within a few weeks to assist with the current workload. To facilitate the production of a meaningful report on the financial implications of historic listing, as required by Projet 166, I propose to seek input from Jersey Heritage Trust and possibly English Heritage. This, in addition to the consultation with the Treasury producing a thorough document, will have significant time-resource implications and it could take some months before I am able to report back.

2.2.1 Senator L. Norman:

I wonder if the Minister could indicate how many months he means by “some months” and also whether the report of the investigation would look at the equity situation, bearing in mind that the States have spent some £750,000 on their own S.S.I.s for use as tourism accommodation on ports and towers, whereas private owners of hospitality accommodation concurrently are restricted to a £10,000 grant.

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I expect to report back, certainly within the next 6 months and hopefully sooner. But this is a matter of which I was unaware until very recently and I consider the appropriate way to deal with this is not just in consultation with Treasury but with the relevant experts, being Jersey Heritage Trust and possibly English Heritage. As far as grants are concerned generally, we are very severely constrained. The grants available have fallen from £75,000 in 2004 to £60,000 in 2006.

2.2.2 Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier:

The Minister stated, with regard to the former senior officer in Building Conservation, that the officer was lost. Could he enlarge upon that and explain exactly what he means, particularly in the light of the fact that he has pledged to replace the post?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

The senior officer left voluntarily. I have advertised recently. We have had responses and, as I have said, I am making sure that the post is effectively temporarily filled by going out and getting professionals to assist with this on a consultancy basis.