

2.6 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for Economic Development regarding proposals to reduce support for the tourism as industry outlined in his draft 2008 Departmental Business Plan:

Further to his written answers on 17th April 2007, will the Minister advise Members whether he proposes to reduce support for the tourism industry by around 30 per cent by 2010 as outlined in his draft 2008 Departmental Business Plan, and if so, why?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf (The Minister for Economic Development):

I will not want to be a broken record, but I refer the Assembly to the answers that I gave to Deputy Southern a few moments ago; the draft reallocations are not designed to represent decreased support for the tourism industry, neither should they be taken by the Deputy in any way of a lack of my support for the tourism industry. My department intends to increase the support to tourism by investment and co-ordination in, for example, the air and sea transport development area, coordination of marketing activity, stimulating inward and outward investment and numerous other new business support initiatives and outlined in the economic growth plan. I would just say to him, H.D. Ferries, the new passenger-only service from France; the new investment with the Normandy French link; 6-daily service with British Airways, 7 at the weekend; increased capacity on Flybe; Thompson Fly arriving from Luton today and Cardiff; B.M.I. services to Heathrow, that is commitment for tourism, as well as the new website that we are developing. I am delighted with the work that my department is doing, providing better value for money, which I hope is going to yield better results for the tourism economy.

2.6.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Thank you, at least it was a different answer, Sir, but to claim success for issues which are nothing to do with his department, H.D. Ferries decided to come here because of a business decision by H.D. Ferries, *et cetera*. To claim success for his department and himself is completely ludicrous. I am glad though to notice that I am to understand that a change in a column of figures from £5.9 million to tourism in 2007 to £4.1 million by 2010 to tourism; £5.9 million to £4.1 million is not a cut. I accept his assurance that these figures do not represent a cut.

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

I do not claim success with H.D. Ferries, I do claim success in putting the right environment, which gives the confidence for people to come and invest in Jersey. I do claim departmental success in making some things happen, such as B.M.I. Other things are happening because we are putting up a clear sign that we are open for business, that we are determined to ensure that there is a future success of the tourism economy, and in that regard I do claim success for creating the right climate. As far as the direct money is concerned, he will know from the column of figures that he has - and again I ask him to come and talk to ask about them - he will see money moving from direct tourism marketing into route development, that is the way you bring people to Jersey, and that is the future of the tourism industry.

2.6.2 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Notwithstanding the Minister's comments about the development of infrastructure, would he not agree with me that what is still, I think, called "event-led tourism" is extremely important to what Jersey offers the tourists? Would he not agree furthermore that last week's stage of the Tour de Bretagne in Jersey was extremely good expenditure of his budget, and would he not confirm that these kind of events such as the Battle of Flowers, the Battle of Britain, the Band of the Island of Jersey, sporting and cultural activities on-Island are a crucial part of our tourism offer, and that he really needs to make sure that this cut we are talking about does not affect the activities of groups such as the ones I have mentioned?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

I welcome the question from the Constable because he knows very well my views that event-led tourism has a vital role in being the magnet to bringing people to Jersey. I got my fingers burnt last year by increasing the funding for event-led tourism, overturning a previous Economic Development Committee's decision not to do so. I support the Tour de Bretagne, I support the Battle of Flowers, the International Air Display, and for the first time Tourism has gone out and marketed the Island for next week's Liberation Day celebrations. So, yes, he is absolutely right; event-led tourism is the way to get people on those services that I was talking away, and they get my department's full support.

2.6.3 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

I echo the congratulations of the Constable for the event-led tourism that is occurring in the Island. The bike thing last week was fantastic. It also makes me wonder where mine has gone; it disappeared from outside the States' building last week. But here we are with, this question, Sir, in relation to the investment in tourism on a serious matter, can the Minister for Economic Development address the concerns or the queries that people have in respect of a convention centre that has been called upon by the private sector for the States to provide. Could the Minister for Economic Development Committee comment upon the issue there please?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

The issue of a conference centre has been something which has been discussed for a long time, and the previous Economic Development Committee did do a full analysis of that and the conclusions were that the resources required to set up such a convention centre were very significant, and I am happy to give the Deputy the figures. Moreover, it was going to require a very high level of ongoing subsidy. Now, that does not mean to say that we are not keen on developing the conference market; my Assistant Minister is Chairman of the Conference Bureau, and the Conference Bureau, under his leadership, is doing a great job in terms of attracting conferences to the Island - another further element of a piece of business that is out there for Jersey. Will we be able to have a big large-scale conference facility? That I am not at all persuaded that the economics of that stack-up, but the Island has a great future and a great potential in marketing for smaller type conferences, of which we are seeing; of which we saw one only a few weeks ago - a huge pharmaceutical conference over here with the hotel beds filled across the Island. We want more of that and the Conference Bureau is doing a good job in achieving that.

2.6.4 Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour:

As the Minister knows I am very pro-tourism. The head of Jersey Tourism Department a few ago very bravely said he was managing decline. If I am to read the Minister correctly, Sir, what he is talking about is the re-allocation of resources. Would the Minister state whether he has any plans to reduce the staffing levels at the Tourism Department?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

I would say that I think that Tourism is going through a transition; we are moving from a longer-term break market to a short-break destination market, and all of the initiatives that we are doing in terms with the Harbours and Airport Department is designed to effectively reinvent really Jersey's tourism offers and create some excitement of that. We are looking at the issue of the Tourism Department. I want to say... and I was very disappointed to read in the newspaper that there were some comments about somehow we were going to handover Jersey to the Jersey Hospitality Association. No way, thank you. What I have done is sent an email to my department saying that I think they are doing a great job, but what we are doing is we are investigating what the best possible model will be in the future for delivering Government money into the tourism sector. It may be it is a Jersey finance model, maybe it is not. But I want to send a clear message to the department staff, who are demoralised when they are being attacked in the newspaper like that, that they are doing a great job, and I hope this Assembly supports their initiatives that we have all seen in the recent weeks.

2.6.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Minister accept that I am eagerly anticipating receiving a date at which we can discuss both the issues that I have raised today and many others, since I have been pursuing him for the last 2 months in order to have a meeting, and for various reasons - including a ski trip - he has been unable to meet?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

I think that is a cheap shot, frankly. I think that is a cheap shot. The Deputy himself was out of the Island when my department organised a Scrutiny visit to, I think, the airport where he was giving a briefing where we brought over, at great expense, consultants to advise the airport, and he did not attend that. Maybe he has personal reasons to do so, but so have I had personal reasons not to do so. My diary is open and my door is open to talk to him in relation to economic matters, and rather than doing cheap shots across this Assembly and through the media come and talk to us and set a date; my diary is open.