

4. Questions to Ministers Without Notice - The Chief Minister

4.1 Deputy J.J. Huet:

Would the Chief Minister confirm that the Waterfront Enterprise Board (W.E.B.) is a company and it is solely-owned by the States of Jersey for the public of Jersey and controlled by a board consisting of a majority of States Members; in other words, this Chamber is in control? I have a supplementary to come, Sir, after that question.

Senator F.H. Walker (The Chief Minister):

I do confirm that the Waterfront Enterprise Board is entirely owned by the public through the States. I also confirm that it is operated by a board. Clearly, the directors have responsibilities according to the Companies Law which they must adhere to. States Members have responsibilities and rights as the shareholder.

4.1.1 Deputy J.J. Huet:

The second question is would the Chief Minister also confirm that if W.E.B. was taken over by the Jersey Enterprise Board, which will be known as J.E.B., the company again will be solely-owned by the States of Jersey for the public of Jersey but will be controlled by a board with a minority of States Members? In other words, this Chamber will not be in control of the decisions of the Jersey Enterprise Board?

Senator F.H. Walker:

No, Sir. J.E.B. will, of course, be 100 per cent publicly owned in exactly the same way as is W.E.B. The constitution of the board is a matter for this House.

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

On a point of order, Deputy Huet is a director of W.E.B. Should she not have properly declared that? I am not saying it is improper; just for the avoidance of doubt, for transparency purposes, she should declare the fact that she is a director.

Deputy J.J. Huet:

I apologise, Sir, I thought everybody realised I was on W.E.B.

4.2 The Connétable of St. Helier:

I realise the Chief Minister has had a lot on his plate in recent days, but could he confirm that he has received from me a chronology dating back to November 2005 documenting the Parish of St. Helier's efforts to get a residents' parking scheme up and running in Cheapside, St. Helier? Would he agree with me that this is long overdue and will he reassure me that as soon as time permits he will do his best to influence the Minister for Transport and Technical Services to accommodate the Parish's wish to carry out this very important quality of life improvement?

Senator F.H. Walker:

I have been a long-standing advocate of residents' parking schemes in St. Helier and I am bitterly disappointed at the inability of whoever is responsible to deliver them. I have not yet read the information passed on to me by the Constable of St. Helier but I will, of course, do so. I do not believe it gets us too far to start allocating blame, but in my view the Parish of St. Helier could and should themselves have done a great deal more to implement more parking zones of this nature throughout the town.

4.2.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Will the Chief Minister remind the House when I last approached him for support in trying to influence the Minister for Transport and Technical Services to enable the Parish to progress its schemes, which have been on the drawing board for so long?

Senator F.H. Walker:

I cannot recall the exact date, but I can also tell the House that I have been approached by the Minister for Transport and Technical Services who has frustrations at the inability of the Parish to deliver. Really, what we need, as in other things, is for the Minister and the Constable to sit down with a shared determination, stop arguing and get on and deliver these schemes.

4.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Given the Minister's comments in written answers that there was not a survey carried out of people who might be aggrieved by the stamp in the passport issue, would he acknowledge that there are an increasing number of complaints that people with these stamps, when they are moving outside of the European Union or when they are entering America, immigration officers are now drawing attention to these stamps and drawing some quite adverse conclusions as to these stamps?

Senator F.H. Walker:

I am not aware of any individual cases, but in any event I acknowledged in my written answer that this is an area of concern. But I maintain the point and I hope one day the Deputy will grasp it, that to try and change this, the consequences of trying to change it would be much more serious not just for the people with the stamp in their passport, but for Jersey people generally.

4.4 Deputy S.C. Ferguson:

If it is the case that W.E.B. and the proposed J.E.B. are owned by the States, then can the Minister really say that the National Gallery is free to the taxpayer? If donations are from private sources - purely private sources - then perhaps, but if they are from the percentage for art then they are not. The extra paid by developers will be priced into the property. Does the Chief Minister not agree that his Minister of Education was perhaps being somewhat naïve in this context in his assertion in the *J.E.P.* that the National Gallery will be free?

Senator F.H. Walker:

Some of the debates about the National Gallery just astonish me, although by now nothing should astonish me. There are no firm plans at this stage to fund the National Gallery. If and when there are, then they will be brought forward and they will obviously be subject to the scrutiny of Members and others.

4.4.1 Deputy S.C. Ferguson:

Perhaps the Chief Minister could answer this for me. The proposed National Gallery, it is proposed that it will be put on a site which is a reclaimed site. All reclamation in the Island has been paid for by the taxpayer; therefore, how can we say that it is free?

Senator F.H. Walker:

I do not know which particular site the Deputy is referring to. The last site I saw was the Weighbridge, and if that is reclaimed land then it was reclaimed many, many, many years ago. You could make the same comment about all the other private sector buildings that have been erected on that land over decades now, if not centuries. I would say again there are no firm proposals at this stage, no planning consent has been given to the best of my knowledge, no planning consent has been sought, so we should avoid red herrings and chasing different theories at this juncture and wait to see if anything hard and fast does emerge.

4.5 The Deputy of St. John:

Could I first begin by congratulating the Chief Minister on the superb way he has dealt with the media frenzy in the last couple of days. Will he be taking exception with the B.B.C. (British Broadcasting Corporation) over the technique that Jeremy Paxman used last night - the very

biased technique he used - in interviewing the Chief Minister last night? Will he be taking this up with the B.B.C.?

Senator F.H. Walker:

Prior to the Newsnight interview, I have already taken up concerns with the B.B.C. that cameras were running when I was not told that that would be the case, and that breaches one of the basic ethics of the B.B.C. as I understand it. I have not yet decided whether I will be taking another complaint forward on the facts that Mr. Paxman totally misquoted me with his opening question and then refused to accept my answers to those questions. Whether or not I do that is a matter for some consideration. I fear that if I do I will make little progress in any event, but that is not necessarily a reason for not doing so.

4.6 Deputy S. Pitman of St. Helier:

Given the seriousness of the investigations into Haut de la Garenne and following the investigations, will the Chief Minister put it to his Council that the building Haut de la Garenne should be demolished.

Senator F.H. Walker:

It is far too early to be asking or certainly answering such questions. What we all have to focus on now is fully supporting the police, our prosecuting authorities and the courts and our social services in doing everything that is necessary (a) to protect children today and (b) to ensure that we bring anyone who is responsible for the alleged heinous crimes to book and prosecute them rigorously and as speedily as possible. We inevitably will turn to the future uses of Haut de la Garenne at a somewhat later date. For the moment it is a criminal investigation site and there is nothing that we can do on that site - quite correctly - at this juncture in any event.

4.7 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Chief Minister regret using the words “shafting the international reputation of the Island” on television?

Senator F.H. Walker:

As I have just said, I was unaware because I was not told - against the code as I understand it of the B.B.C. - that the cameras were working. But no, I do not regret what I said. What I said to Senator Syvret was - and I excuse the language but it was, I thought, a private conversation: “You are seeking to shaft Jersey internationally.” I maintain that comment and the evidence of the last few days, particularly, I understand, this morning, fully endorses my view.

4.8 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Does the Chief Minister have a communication strategy for dealing with the current problem and if so when is he going to start using it?

Senator F.H. Walker:

I do not believe that question even deserves the dignity of an answer. If the Constable cannot see how we have met the onslaught from the national media over the last 24 hours, then he must be both blind and deaf.

4.9 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

Will the Chief Minister be attending this evening the service at Gouray Church that the Dean has so wisely made available for States Members and members of the public to express our prayers and our wishes for peace and the healing that is required in this Island.

Senator F.H. Walker:

Yes, Sir. I hope as many Members of the House and as many Islanders will attend the service as possible. I guess my only fear at the moment from reports I am getting is that it will be massively over-subscribed. But that in itself has to be a tremendous indication of the way normal Jersey people will be reacting, have reacted and are reacting to this horrific turn of events in our midst and, Sir, can I say I warmly congratulate and thank the Dean for arranging the service so quickly and at such short notice?

4.10 Deputy P.N. Troy of St. Brelade:

None of us in this Government condone child abuse but I would ask the Chief Minister is he confident that cases of child abuse are historic, going back a great number of years, and that current childcare services are of a very high standard ensuring that young people are not in any danger of abuse at present.

Senator F.H. Walker:

Can I best answer that by making my statement, as planned, after this question and answer period?

The Deputy Bailiff:

Yes, if Deputy Troy wishes to re-ask the question then, he can do so.

4.11 Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

Does the Chief Minister have any intention in bringing to this House the strategic master plan for the east of La Collette?

The Deputy Bailiff:

For East of La Collette, did you say, Deputy?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

Yes, Sir, in due course, when such plans are fully developed. Sir, can I press the Minister? Is the Minister able to put any more meat on the bones, so to speak, and give a date as to when this document will be available for the House?

Senator F.H. Walker:

No, Sir, I am not at this stage. This is work in progress, planning under development, as it were, but I do confirm that it will come to the House at the appropriate time when the plans are finalised and recommendations can be made.

4.12 Deputy G.P. Southern:

What steps will the Chief Minister take to ensure that young people are better informed about the widest range of options available for catering for the ageing society than were the people who took part in the presentation on 19th January?

Senator F.H. Walker:

I have to say that in all the consultation process no other major options have been suggested. If, however, the Deputy has other major options in mind, then I would be grateful if he would let me know and we will seek to incorporate them in the Imagine Jersey youth event.

4.12.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The Minister has not answered the question. The 4 options presented on 19th January, only one was fully examined; the others were not. Will he give further information for young people who are brighter than the average and very sharp so that they can better understand the complexity of the argument when he does this youth presentation?

Senator F.H. Walker:

I am completely satisfied with the information that was provided to Imagine Jersey and, unless I hear further suggestions from the Deputy or indeed anyone else on how that might be augmented, that is the same information that will be presented to the youth event. Sir, I would point out to the House yet again that Deputy Southern has sought to undermine the entire Imagine Jersey process, even before it took place and it seems to me quite, to say the least, disappointing and surprising that the best attempts to consult with the public are continually derided by the Deputy and some of his colleagues.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Very well. I am afraid that brings the questions without notice of the Chief Minister to an end.