

2.12 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains of the Minister for Economic Development regarding visitor beds available in each of the last 5 years:

Would the Minister advise of the number of visitor beds available in each of the last 5 years and would he explain whether he considers this sufficient to cater for future increase in tourist numbers?

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

The Deputy, along with all Members, will have this morning in front of them a copy of the *2007 Jersey Tourism Annual Report*. With regard to the exact number of bed spaces available, I would ask the Members and the Deputy to turn to page 20 of the report where he can see the details of the registered establishments and bed spaces going back to 1995. In 2007 Jersey had 159 registered establishments offering 13,000 bed spaces; hotels account for approximately 75 per cent of that total bed stock. The number evolution over the period that the Deputy, I think, is asking is: 2003, 14,300; 2004, 13,700; 2005, 13,400; 2006, 13,000 and 2007, 13,000 as well. Monthly occupancy rates range from a low point of approximately 18 per cent to a high of 82 per cent in the summer period. So there is certainly room for additional business within the current bed stock. However, the welcome addition of new accommodation in the stock is particularly good with reinvestments being made by some industries to existing stock. I would also circulate to Members, later on during the day, a graph which shows the available bed stock with the actual occupancy through the year which could, I think, further assist the Deputy in his question.

2.12.1 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

I am grateful for the answer but it must come as a concern to some Members here that we hear recently - I think in the last week or so - that yet another 3 hotels are due to close, the Ommaroo, the Normandie and another nearby, the name of which escapes me. It does seem to me that we are not placing ourselves to take advantage of travel that may come our way as a result of rising prices in fuel and thereby prices increasing on travel. I mean it is only a week or so ago, I think, British Airways surcharged their long-haul flight by £218. What exactly is the Minister doing to invigorate tourism to take advantage of the situation which obviously would be of benefit to the Island economically? It does seem that since the demise of our Tourism Committee that the tourism industry has virtually been abandoned. I notice recently there is a reduction in funding proposed for the tourism industry, surely we should be reinvesting. What are the Minister's comments?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

I do not know where the Deputy has been over the last 2 years but I have to say I completely do not understand his comments about the tourism industry being abandoned. In fact, I do not think over the last 2 years there has been anything like the amount of initiatives in order to re-boost the tourism economy. If I cite just one policy which is yielding - I am delighted to say - significant results, it is the huge investment that we are now making with Jersey Airport in developing the route network. BMI, easyJet, all of the range of new services that we have seen over the last 2 years does not happen by accident and it certainly would not have happened in the old silo days of the Harbours and Airport Committee and the Economic Development Committee working separately. A huge amount has been done. I announced a number of weeks ago the boosting of approximately £250,000-worth of additional funding for advertising at the end of the Easter period. We have invested in the website which is now running after some delays and is performing extremely well. On Friday I visited the apart-hotel over the bus station which has availability of 63 excellent apartments that are self-catering units. Les Ormes is opening. Sir, I have to say that there have been enormous efforts made in the visitor economy. Travel was up last year by 4.2 per cent and for the first time staying leisure visitors were up. The year-to-date figures are looking, in a difficult marketplace, problematic, but there is a structural adjustment going on and we will see a

continuation of some hotels leaving the industry and new properties coming on the market with investment.