

3.5 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade of the Minister for Economic Development regarding the cash machine facility at Jersey Airport:

Does the Minister consider that it is satisfactory that the airport is now without any landside cash machine and will he inform Members of progress in negotiations to find a new operator for the facility?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean (The Minister for Economic Development):

No, I do not. I am both saddened and disappointed by HSBC's decision to remove the cash dispenser in the arrivals hall at Jersey Airport and I share the disappointment felt by some users in this regard. The circumstances that led the bank to make the decision were based on the levels of use that made it no longer viable for them to operate it. It has never been the intention of Jersey Airport to lose this facility, but we have no other option but to accept the bank's decision, a decision that is understandable in the current economic climate where all businesses are looking to trim unnecessary costs. I can confirm that Jersey Airport is talking with alternative suppliers in the hope that a suitable landside site can be identified and a new facility reinstated in due course. However, while we would like an immediate resolve to this issue we cannot realistically expect a quick decision as this site gets low usage compared to comparative cash dispensing locations.

3.5.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

Once again we see that economic climate excuse being used to cover a multitude of sins. I would ask the Minister respectfully whether he would consider when the contract for the internal cash machines, i.e. the machines which are airside, come up for renewal, whether there could be a specific clause, a service level agreement, so that anyone who takes on the more lucrative cash machines within the building are obliged to provide facilities on the landside. Would he consider this?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

It is a commercial decision. First of all, I should say to the Deputy that the bank providing the facility airside would not describe those particular facilities as lucrative. They are there as a facility. They do wash their face, but they are certainly not overly profitable. We will continue to work hard. I can assure the Deputy that my department is not sleeping on the job in this regard. We will continue to work hard [Laughter] in what is a serious issue. I do appreciate the Deputy's concerns and indeed some Islanders who have concerns in this regard, but it is not an easy solution to rectify it.

3.5.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Notwithstanding the Minister's very brave attempts at a joke there, which I [Laughter] will concede did raise certain levels of mirth, I think this is only further indicative of the flippancy of the situation. I have received the flippancy of attitude right through when I have been trying to deal with this. Does he not accept that not only are we a tourist destination - certainly we have been - we are an international finance centre *par excellence*, so we say, and we cannot even manage a cash machine to welcome people when they come into the Island. Places like Anguilla and Tobago, when I have been there, certainly have all had cash machines - Jersey cannot even manage one so I would suggest respectfully that we do not make light of this. Does the Minister agree with those sentiments?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I would point out to the Deputy that first of all, we are not making light of these issues at all, but it is a commercial matter. It is not Jersey Airport who runs the cash machine; it is the bank that runs and operates it at some considerable cost. Do you expect a commercial operation, a bank, to lose money running and operating a facility? It is as simple as that. It is not viable. We will continue to try and find alternative operators of these facilities, but because of the low usage it is not easy.

3.5.3 Deputy J.A. Martin:

Given the size of Jersey Airport is there any clear signage for arriving passengers to tell them that at least 100 yards away there is a cash machine?

Deputy M. Tadier:

There is no cash machine. That is the point.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

I am sorry; it was there the last time I left the Island. [Laughter]

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Perhaps I could just clarify for the Deputy. The cash machine is on the airside so it is there for passengers as a facility and a service. There are remaining cash machines for passengers who are about to travel. It is not available, clearly, to those who have just arrived.

3.5.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

Would the Minister consider putting up a sign saying that Jersey is closed for business at the airport for tourists and that we do not want them coming over?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

It hardly deserves an answer. I am afraid the Deputy was talking about flippancy earlier on; this particular question is descending to a farcical level.

3.5.5 Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville:

Would the Minister not agree that the general welcome in brochures, posters, general merchandise at the airport is utterly dismal?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

No, I would not say it is utterly dismal. There is always room for improvement. There are various improvements that have been made and more that will be, but the constraints as always - and particularly at the moment - are with regard to the cost of making such improvements. We have to remember in the current economic climate the airport is seeing passenger numbers falling by 11 per cent. That has a significant on costs. We are demanding from the airport management team that they find savings. It is not an easy task. They also have to try and drive additional revenue. We will continue to improve as and when it is affordable.