

2.11 Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services regarding the involvement of Connex in unscheduled services that would otherwise be undertaken by private coach companies:

Would the Minister confirm whether Connex is offering unscheduled services that would otherwise be taken by private coach companies and if so, would he state whether this is appropriate for a company that is subsidised by the taxpayer?

Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade (The Minister for Transport and Technical Services):

I am aware that Connex support local community and charity efforts wherever possible and if the event is on a scheduled bus route, they may provide additional relief services where the passenger pays the normal fare. There are other events which are not on scheduled services where they might provide a free service to ensure the public have transport away from the site. This was the case, for example, at the recent Grassroots Festival held on 1st August at Val de la Mare where a free service was provided from Val de la Mare to Liberation Station. I see no reason why Connex should not support such events as the organisers are free to approach any company to provide that service and choose who they want. Connex is very keen to support the local community and the provision of these additional services, including relief services for charity events which are on a scheduled route, is funded entirely by Connex with a fair revenue being passed on to T.T.S. (Transport and Technical Services). This is very credible from the company's point of view who I know wish to be a fully integrated part of our local community and are demonstrating this by this sort of action. I might add that, if the Deputy wishes, I have a list of various events which they have supported over the past year and I am keen to encourage them to continue in that vein. Thank you.

2.11.1 The Deputy of Grouville:

Given past rulings by the J.C.R.A. regarding cross-subsidisation, and in this case cross-subsidisation with the benefit of taxpayer's money, does the Minister have a view especially in regard to the unfair advantage this gives to Connex and has the potential of putting private enterprise at a serious disadvantage or out of business?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

No, I think the Deputy misunderstands. Connex are doing this at their own volition. They are paying their drivers and not charging for so doing. Any other company has the option of doing that and if the other companies wish to support community events, which sometimes might be slightly marginal in cost, I think they have the option of doing it and I am sure those who are organising such events will be getting the best deal that they can. Those who wish to underwrite such charity events, I think, deserve support of my department and I shall continue to do so.

2.11.2 The Deputy of St. John:

Given that the Island own the buses, *et cetera*, can it be right that they are used in this way given that there is, we are told, no funding to do routes out into the northern Parishes, and yet the buses can be used in this matter. Who is picking up maintenance of the buses if they get damaged at one of these functions?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

The Island does not own the buses. Connex own the buses and are responsible for the maintenance of them according to the bus contract which I have here.

2.11.3 The Deputy of Grouville:

Much in the same vein as the Deputy of St. John, if Connex do have spare capacity, should they not be putting on additional scheduled services where they hold a captive market and have monopoly rather than competing in the private sector?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I still maintain this is not really a competition issue. This is providing a free service for charitable efforts and if it were to be a chargeable service I would agree entirely with the Deputy, but that is not the case. Connex are providing of their volition support to charitable events and I shall continue to support that. I do not see it as being a competition issue.