

3.6 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade of the Minister for Economic Development regarding the possibility of attracting filmmakers to Jersey

Given the continued success of the Branchage Film Festival, what scope does the Minister see for attracting filmmakers to the Island to shoot their movies here and what specific steps will he be taking to make this happen?

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

I would like to take this opportunity, if I may, first of all to congratulate the organisers for the recent Branchage Film Festival [**Approbation**] which I am sure Members will agree with me was a significant success, extremely welcome and obviously helped to raise the profile of Jersey with overseas producers and executives. Economic Development recognises that the Island has many attractions for local and overseas film producers and helps co-ordinate States and external offers of support whenever necessary. In common with other initiatives designed to help diversify the economy, the department has been working with the private sector partners to assess the potential for establishing a filmmaking sector. Recent research has indicated that the scale of investment required to establish a strong sector presence would not produce commensurate economic benefits and makes strong recommendation that further work be undertaken with grass roots local producers adopting a bottom up approach towards developing this sector. We are also in discussions with E.S.C. (Education, Sport and Culture) for a joint approach with the involvement of the Jersey Arts Trust which will help address the grass roots community.

3.6.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

I am interested to hear this novel idea of bottom up. It seems that trickle down does not apply to the film industry but I am sure that the Minister is just as keen to make sure that this very competitive and lucrative industry comes to Jersey and I am sure he is keen to make sure that we push all the right buttons to get this industry to come to Jersey. So will the Minister give assurances and give specific examples of what concrete steps have been taken to attract the film industry to Jersey?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Yes, I thoroughly agree with the Deputy. Certainly recent research that we have had done has identified that the Island already has a thriving film and screen industry, one that needs to be developed and we are keen to develop further. Indeed, with the first Branchage Festival, representatives from Jersey Finance Limited and Economic Development met with more than 100 producers and executives to do a presentation on Jersey and the opportunities that existed here within that sector. Indeed, Economic Development also went last year to the Edinburgh Film Festival to give a similar presentation to raise awareness of the opportunities that exist within Jersey. I should add it is not just necessarily filming in the Island where benefits exist. There are opportunities in intellectual property - which Members will be aware we discussed yesterday - for filmmakers, as there are indeed with finance where different structures can be put in place and so on. So, yes, it is a lucrative area that we are working to develop.

3.6.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier:

I am interested in the Minister's reply that he has just given to Deputy Tadier. I have been informed that one Hollywood producer did approach the department and was turned away. Could the Minister please explain the reasons why?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

The Deputy will probably be aware - as I am sure other Members are - that the department gets many approaches for support in many different ways, as we were just discussing with Deputy Power a few moments ago. We assess requests that come forward, estimate the economic benefit to the Island and, based on that information, we make a decision as to the level of support that is appropriate or not as the case may be. Unfortunately, where we are involved in taxpayers' money, we need to ensure that we get a sensible and effective return on whatever investment that is requested.

3.6.3 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Could I ask the Minister if the reason why it was unacceptable was because the subject of the proposed television series was on the finance industry?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

That is not my understanding.

3.6.4 Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I must declare a non-commercial interest as I am on the Branchage Film Festival Committee. Does the Minister believe that tax breaks could be a way forward?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

That is an area that has been looked at in a preliminary sense. At face value, it has certain benefits. It is a complex issue that involves other departments, and of course the Treasury, and I think an area that probably needs further investigation is one of the Jersey Film Commission. That is an area which has some potential and, indeed, I would go so far as to say we perhaps should be looking at a Channel Island Film Commission with the islands working together in this area.

3.6.5 The Deputy of St. Mary:

Yes, the Minister is obviously aware of the Island's beauty and the pool of creativity we have here. We have natural assets in this direction of the film industry. I would like him to assure the House that he will produce to Members the details of the scoping, like the initial studies around the intellectual property drive that we are seeing coming to fruition and the initial scoping and work around the film industry. I just want to know whether he will let Members see the initial work done to assess the viability of both those strands of our diversified economy.

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Yes, I am more than happy to share with Members information that I am able to share. I can say at this stage one piece of work has been carried which, unfortunately, the authors of the work have confidentiality attached to it at this stage. But I am sure, once complete, there may be an opportunity to share that but certainly the wider research that has been carried out in both I.P. (Intellectual Property) and the film industry is something that I have no concerns about sharing with Members if they would find that of value. Indeed, the Deputy himself, as a member of the Economic Affairs Scrutiny Panel, will be receiving significant information with regard to I.P. and the new legislation that is planned for the early part of next year.

3.6.6 Deputy M. Tadier:

I thank the Minister for his answer and I think we all agree that Jersey does have beautiful natural assets which would be an attraction to Jersey but will the Minister

acknowledge that - given the context of an example where a film which was set in Jersey in the recent past had to be re-shot I think in the Isle of Man but it was set in Jersey and not filmed in Jersey - we cannot keep replacing our natural assets and that we have to provide concrete sets, it is complicated to make films and that may require initial investment which does not seek an initial return in the short-term?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Yes, the Deputy is right in regard to investment. Yes, there may well need to be investment but whatever investment is made it needs to show a return within an acceptable period of time. There is without doubt, as I have already mentioned, a thriving film and screen industry within the Island. There are films and productions that have been made like *Under the Greenwood Tree* and *Living with the Enemy* and, indeed, the Island has developed some strength in special interest areas, documentaries and so on, so there are many different areas where we are already benefiting. More work needs to be done and I recognise that but, indeed, you must be able to get a sensible return on the investment at some point. We continue to work in this area.