

3.3 Deputy P.J. Rondel of St. John of the Minister for Economic Development regarding the closure of the national and local Teletext services:

Following Teletext U.K. (United Kingdom) closures of the national and local teletext service for the harbour and airports as well as for the weather map pages, what action if any has been taken to enhance the existing services provided by the B.B.C. Ceefax, which currently provides a partial airport service on page 462?

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

The decision to discontinue the teletext service was indeed regrettable but it was beyond our control. For the avoidance of doubt it was also beyond the control of Channel Television. The decision was made by Associated Newspapers Limited after discussions with the regulator Ofcom. The service had been loss-making in recent years and no viable business model could be found. It had effectively come to the end of its commercial and technological life. The Ceefax service is in the same position and will also be turned off in November at the end of the digital switchover process. Ceefax has been replaced by the B.B.C. Freeview Red Button Service but the information on Teletext and Ceefax is currently still available on a wide range of other media. Both ports have excellent websites, which include live arrivals and departures information. The States website, thisisjersey, Jersey Inside, the B.B.C. and other media all display weather and travel information.

3.3.1 The Deputy of St. John:

I am disappointed in the Minister's answer. Recently the Minister had a Digi presentation on 12th January at the museum, did he think of mentioning this to Mr. Taylor who gave the presentation, because I spoke to him on that day and he did say he would look into seeing what could be put in place? Will the Minister therefore speak to Mr. Taylor - and I am sure he has got his card that he gave us all on that day because he introduced me to him, -and see if something cannot be put in place given the Island and not everybody have computers? There are an awful lot of people who do not have computers on this Island and I was disappointed in the Minister's answer in that respect.

The Bailiff:

Will you put your question then, when you speak to Mr. Taylor?

The Deputy of St. John:

May I finish the question? Given that safety at sea is paramount to this Island and a good up-to-date weather forecast is paramount. What, as the Minister has already stated by using Teletext ...

The Bailiff:

I am sorry it is turning into a statement, Deputy, I am sorry you asked the Deputy your question.

The Deputy of St. John:

I will come back on that one.

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I never like to see the Deputy of St. John disappointed, and indeed I was delighted that he turned up to the presentation given by Mr. Taylor who is leading the Digital U.K. switchover process, however the gentleman in question does not represent the

B.B.C. and there are difficulties there. We have had conversations. We have also had conversations with the B.B.C. I am afraid, Ceefax - like Teletext - is old technology: sadly it has been switched off but there are many other alternatives.

3.3.2 The Deputy of St. John:

The Minister's alternatives given to the House this morning are far from adequate. Will the Minister instruct his officers to look around and find proper alternatives because currently if members of the public wish to get an up-to-date weather forecast on a weekend by the method he has described, by online through computerisation, you are getting something which is already 3 or 4 days old. It is not up-to-date and therefore when you go to Channelonline, *et cetera*, you are not getting an up-to-date forecast, because I have tried it several times over the holiday period, and we need up-to-date information on a screen that the public can deal with safety at sea issues, and also our arrivals and departures at the ports. This is an island, not a part of a greater continent where things can be brought in over the border.

[11:15]

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Of course I understand the concerns that the Deputy of St. John is explaining to Members. The department is always alert to needs and requirements to improve services but quite frankly modern technologies are far better able to give the latest up-to-date information with regard to travel information and weather than, dare I say it, the outdated current or past services of Teletext and Ceefax. We will continue of course, to answer his question, to look for alternatives to deliver the best possible service. Safety at sea and others are vitally important.

3.3.3 Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour:

Following on from that, after we have gone to digital it will still be possible to pick up the Teletext signal, for instance 888 for people who are hard of hearing. Would the Minister consider talking to the transmission bodies, in effect linking-up both the harbours and the airports to the system, which will come through direct, because I understand it is a financial decision to abandon the Teletext system, and see what can be done with doing it for a direct system straight from the harbours and airports straight to the TV screen? As has been pointed out, not everyone has computers. Does the Minister not agree?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Well, I certainly agree with the Deputy that not everybody has computers. Clearly computers are not the only medium, you can get weather and travel information through mobile hand sets and in other ways, and as technology moves forwards I am sure there will be many more ways in which that vital information can be gained. There have been discussions about the possibility of linking up the airport and the 2 ports. The belief is that the cost and practicality of doing such a thing is not going to make it viable so I am afraid that solution in the future is unlikely but modern technology does offer us all sorts of other opportunities.

3.3.4 The Deputy of St. John:

The Minister's response is a bit woolly. Will the Minister please confirm that he will do something about it, put an officer on it for a few hours and make something happen? Nothing is impossible even with a small cost involved.

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

As I said to the Deputy at the beginning, we are continually reviewing and will always review ways in which vital information is made available to the public, so in that respect yes. I hope that will give him some degree of reassurance. I am very satisfied of course with the technology available at the moment but we will continue to look for other opportunities.