

#### **4.8 Deputy K.C. Lewis of the Minister for Economic Development regarding the delay in the opening of the new air traffic control tower at the airport:**

Following the recent announcement of a delay in the opening of the new air traffic control tower at the airport, would the Minister give details of the reasons for the delay and assure Members that the airport is being run efficiently and cost effectively?

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

The recently revised date for the new air traffic control tower to become operational demonstrates Jersey Airport's absolute commitment to safe and compliant flight operations. It was always made clear that the operational live date was subject to revision. This was to take into account the complex system installations, full testing, training and regulatory approvals. On the question of efficiency and costs, I can assure Members that the airport is well managed. Furthermore, the drive to reduce operating costs and to maximise revenues will continue at both ports. I should add that this new air traffic control facility has been constructed on time and on budget. Importantly, it will deliver air traffic services much more efficiently and cost effectively than was previously possible.

#### **4.8.1 Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier:**

I am surprised by a number of comments made by the Minister. First of all, that the system is on time and on budget when my understanding is the main reason for the delay is that the electronics system which is concerned with the electronic strips of information, which relates to the movement of aircraft, which was prepared in the past in a handwritten form by assistant air traffic controllers has actually failed its factory tests 3 times so far and is not working. Secondly, the Minister says that the airport is being run efficiently. Can he explain therefore how the airport can justify paying an air traffic controller £68,000 who has failed both his radar and earth field controller's licences and whose instructors do not feel safe in letting him loose on the travelling public and at the present time is just sitting in an office with no particular duties?

#### **Senator A.J.H. Maclean:**

I am always delighted to surprise the good Deputy. First of all, with regard to the project being completed on time and on budget, that is absolutely correct as I have already stated. The construction of the air traffic control facility was delivered in exactly that way. The Deputy is correct in one respect with regard to some testing of complex electrical equipment which comes from the U.K. Testing is carried out in the U.K. and until that is accepted then it will not be delivered to the Island. As far as the final live operational date, until all that equipment has been installed and that is being overseen, and full training is undertaken then of course the facility will not go live. There is a difference between the 2. With regard, I am afraid the Deputy did ask about 3 questions, with regard to the particular case of an air traffic controller, I am sure the Deputy would understand I am not prepared to talk about individual cases in a public forum such as this.

#### **4.8.2 The Deputy of St. John:**

Can the Minister confirm that some of the equipment for the control tower was supplied by N.A.T.S. (National Air Traffic Service) and will he also confirm that no tendering was done for this equipment, and will he also confirm that management of air traffic control in fact comes under N.A.T.S. and was taken away basically from

our local Department? If this is the case, is this the future for the airport that it will be run totally from outside the Island if management is done by N.A.T.S?

**Senator A.J.H. Maclean:**

I think the Deputy is right in many respects and I think it is important that Members understand that in terms of moving the airport on to a new level this is probably the most complex construction, the air traffic control tower, and project that has been undertaken. N.A.T.S., as the National Air Traffic Service in the U.K., is without doubt the most appropriate organisation for overseeing such an operation and yes indeed we do have a N.A.T.S. secondee operating at the airport and his expertise has been absolutely invaluable, not only in this project but in terms of bringing forward and improving air traffic services delivered by the Island to ensure that the public remains safe which is our primary aim.

**4.8.3 The Deputy of St. John:**

The Minister has not answered all of my question. Did the equipment that has been put in the control tower, was it on a tender basis or has it been supplied direct from N.A.T.S. without going to tender?

**Senator A.J.H. Maclean:**

The equipment, much of which is specialist equipment, was sourced through N.A.T.S. It was under a negotiated arrangement and N.A.T.S. supply similar specialist equipment to installations of air traffic control towers, both in the U.K. and in Europe. It was without doubt value for money and I am very satisfied with the process that was undertaken.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

A supplementary, Sir, on that one, if I may?

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

You have already had one supplementary, Deputy.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Oh, Sir, you are cutting me off at the knees.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

That is the first time I have heard that from you, Deputy. I had it a long time in a different role.

**4.8.4 Deputy D.J. De Sousa:**

Can the Minister confirm or deny that all training of air traffic controllers is on schedule and that all are achieving the standards that are required?

**Senator A.J.H. Maclean:**

With regard, if the Deputy is specifically asking about this air traffic control tower, training has not been completed, that is one of the primary reasons for the delay in it going operationally live. Training has been delayed and indeed for primarily safety reasons it has been decided to leave it until after the very busy summer season where we have something like 250 to 300 daily movements. The training will be conducted throughout the summer period and it is intended that the tower will go live later in the year, identified approximately in November.

#### **4.8.5 Deputy D.J. De Sousa:**

Can the Minister expand on what the delays are in the training and the reason for them?

#### **Senator A.J.H. Maclean:**

I think I covered that in an earlier question. Quite simply there was a delay in some of the testing of essential equipment in the U.K. and on the basis of that the installation was put back. It is important training is undertaken in an appropriate fashion and with the onset of the busy summer season it has been decided for safety reasons to delay until after the summer season.

#### **The Deputy Bailiff:**

We have time for 2 more questions. Deputy Le Hérissier.

#### **4.8.6 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

The Minister spoke of a much more cost effective system. Could he tell the House the percentage savings that have emanated from the move to this new traffic control system?

#### **Senator A.J.H. Maclean:**

I cannot give the Deputy a percentage saving. Clearly the facility is an £11 million construction. However, the processes and procedures for operation have seen immediately some savings in terms of air traffic control assistance. Unfortunately those posts have been lost as we move to a more automated system. Clearly that is going to show longer term efficiencies and savings. I can give the Deputy under separate cover more details if he would so desire.

#### **4.8.7 Deputy M.R. Higgins:**

First of all, just one comment about the N.A.T.S. person who gave the advice. He has left the Island or is in the process of leaving the Island and a new N.A.T.S. person is being appointed to replace him at this critical time, and yes the building has been completed on time and budget in terms of the construction but obviously the electronics is giving some problems. My second question really is therefore again can the Minister confirm or deny that air traffic controllers are receiving £500 per day when training on the new system in addition to their normal salary?

#### **Senator A.J.H. Maclean:**

The first point about the N.A.T.S. contract, it is exactly that and yes we have had personnel that have been supplied by N.A.T.S. and that has rolled over and there is a new contract being put in place to continue that process. That is perfectly acceptable. With regard to payment, I am not going to discuss details of payments. All I will say is that both I and the management are perfectly satisfied with the payment structures in place at the moment at the airport. I would add, though, that with regard to ongoing efficiencies there is no stone being left unturned with regard to the airport or for that matter the harbour. There will be changes as restructuring is ongoing and further efficiencies, I give an undertaking, will be delivered at both ports. There is much work to be done. Thank you.