

3.12 The Deputy of St. Martin of the Minister for Treasury and Resources regarding the current use of Haut de la Garenne:

Will the inform Members of the current use of Haut de la Garenne and whether any decision has been made for its long-term future?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf (The Minister for Treasury and Resources):

Sir, may I ask Deputy Le Fondré who has responsibility for property?

The Bailiff:

Yes.

Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré (Assistant Minister for Treasury and Resources - rapporteur):

Yes, throughout the spring and summer of 2010 my department has continued to permit the use of accommodation at Haut de la Garenne, primarily to provide a summer home for the Island's lifeguards but in addition any spare room capacity has been let for occasional use by visiting groups, both military and private. As an example, a kayaking group was provided with accommodation for a number of weeks in May. As usual the building will be closed for the winter and obviously appropriate and suitable security arrangements implemented to take care of the premises. As regards to the long-term future, no decision has yet been made. We are considering a number of options and we have received a number of expressions of interest from organisations, which seem to continue with hostel-related uses, which are being evaluated. Thank you.

3.12.1 The Deputy of St. Martin:

I am grateful for the answer. It is also pleasing to see that the premises are being used during the summer but one is concerned about the winter. Who will be paying for the cost of the supervision or the security of those premises over the winter?

Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré:

As with many things property-related it comes out of the Property Holdings budget.

3.12.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Could the Assistant Minister tell us whether he has been approached by any property developers for developing the site as well?

Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré:

The short answer is no. What I would just say is that the former purpose of the hostel was obviously both a financial benefit - in fact in 2007 it provided the best return we have had to date for £75,000 direct to the States - but most importantly it had a very strong social benefit from the perspective of, effectively, budget accommodation for the tourism industry. I think, certainly at this stage, if it is at all possible we would very much like to see some form of social benefit continue which is why certainly, in the short term and the medium term, we are looking at the present uses and seeing how we can gently reintroduce the building back into society. I suppose, almost from a medical term, the situation has been stabilised and now we have got to see where we are going.

3.12.3 Deputy A.E. Jeune:

Having been told last week by somebody who had visited the Island for a wedding, there was a large group of them and how they had stayed at Haut de la Garenne when it was a hostel and how wonderful the experience was, how soon does the Assistant Minister believe that he could bring forward returning it to that former state?

Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré:

There are 2 issues in that question.

[11:00]

One is in respect of the actual Y.H.A. (Youth Hostel Association) which provided a very high level of accommodation provision, my understanding at the moment is that they have indicated that they would not presently be willing to return for the use of that building, which is obviously a disappointment but equally understandable. However, they do have a long-term interest in re-establishing themselves in the Island because obviously the offer and the business they generated fitted-in with their business plan and evidently was profitable. In terms of the exploration of hostel-related uses, I cannot give a timeframe. I would certainly hope that we would be pursuing that in the next few months.

3.12.4 Senator T.J. Le Main:

During the police investigation half the building was wilfully destroyed by the police, not dismantled but destroyed by the police. We were told that it would cost something like £300,000 to bring it back to its proper condition again. Could Members be told if work has been done on this? Has money been expended in putting this building back to its original condition and who paid for it? Of course it is the taxpayer that would have paid for it.

Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré:

The Senator is right, ultimately it is the taxpayer that pays for it. There was an allocation of money set aside out of the whole funding that was put towards this matter for restoration of the building. The Senator is correct in the approximate sum of about £300,000. In terms of work that has been done to date, some restoration work has been done. Certain floors have been reinstated to allow the present use but not all the significant structural stuff has been completed. Principally, as I said, the building has been stabilised. It is acceptable for present use and then I think a judgment will be made as to if there is an acceptable future, from the point of view of hostel work, *et cetera*, then obviously the rest of the money will have to be expended in order to put the building back into a fully useable state.

3.12.5 Deputy A.T. Dupre of St. Clement:

I know it sounds a bit silly but could we just change the name of the building and then it might stop some of the bad memories?

Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré:

To an extent that is a political decision and I would have a degree of sympathy with that, but one needs to weigh that judgment up very carefully and I would not want to comment on that properly today until we have made a considered decision on the whole matter.

The Bailiff:

I have seen a question from Deputy Power. I do not usually allow one Minister to question another Minister. Deputy ...

Deputy S. Power:

He answered my question, Sir.

The Bailiff:

Very well, then Deputy of St. Martin, do you wish a final question?

3.12.6 The Deputy of St. Martin:

Yes. Just to assist Senator Le Main, maybe the Assistant Minister will confirm that in an answer he gave last year he said that the costs of the particular partial restoration of works were £31,000 and that possibly the extra work required will be replacing those floorboards and possibly the bottom staircase which will need replacing, so therefore the figure of £300,000 is well over estimate and is unlikely to cost that sort of money?

Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré:

That is not strictly the case. The breakdown I have of numbers adds up to something like £225,000. If you add a degree of contingency and professional fees in there the estimated total is potentially £300,000. The Deputy is correct that things such as the staircase are a significant portion of that money but there are obviously a number of elements to that and not all that work has been done as yet.

The Bailiff:

Very well, we will move to the next question then which Deputy Southern will ask of the Minister for Treasury and Resources. Deputy Southern.