

## **Urgent question**

**22nd June 2011**

### **1.1 Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services regarding the ordering of railings for the St. Helier Town Park.**

Will the Minister agree to place on hold the ordering of railings for the Millennium Town Park until the outcome of the debate on the proposition of Deputy De Sousa Millennium Town Park: railings P.117/2011 is known?

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

I would first like to start this answer by saying that the Transport and Technical Services Department has been charged to deliver the Millennium Town Park and its name in itself indicates that the project is long overdue, as all Members will know. We are forging ahead with this project and have undertaken it in a proper way. We have consulted with numerous people and the feedback has been significant. We have charged a professional designer to design the park and the park designs have been well circulated. Subsequently, there has been a petition with 400 signatories asking for railings. We have had numerous meetings with the Friends of the Town Park, we have had numerous meetings with politicians of the area and the result is that there have been several changes of mind in that the roads surrounding the park were to be closed initially and are now to be opened. This has cast a different set of circumstances on the project and thrown in some safety issues, which has resulted in the requirement for railings from the Planning Department. Having said that, the area under contention, as I understand it, is the area at the Talman end, which is the Bath Street or David Place end of the site. My suggestion is that I would rather not put on hold the whole of the railing order because I understand that the Gas Place end is not contentious. I would rather be given leave by the House to proceed with those and discuss the Talman end upon completion of the road improvements, which will take place towards the end of the year. The granite work on the road will incur the necessity to close the roads for a period of time and I think at that point it will be the period best judged whether to have the low railings at the Talman end. So I would respond to the question directly by saying I would rather not hold the ordinance in its entirety because that will then prolong the delivery of the town park even further than it is already and I do not think it will serve any material purpose. I am happy to discuss the situation further with Deputy De Sousa by way of a comment later on or by way of informal meetings so that all parties can be satisfied.

#### **1.1.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:**

I am grateful to the Minister for his concession and that is indeed of comfort to us. Could he further clarify or confirm that, while we appreciate the need to get this job done after 12 years of waiting, it is important that it should not be rushed. Phrases have been used at officer level such as “sacrificial turf”, in other words, that the park may be hurried into a state of completion for its grand opening with work that will then be undone after the opening. That, I think, would be of real concern to ratepayers and taxpayers and I would

ask him to confirm that the job will not be rushed and if he needs more time to get it finished, he will delay the opening by a matter of weeks or possibly months.

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

There are 2 issues there which I would like to answer: one is in terms of sacrificial turf. I think at any opening ceremony if there is to be one, and I am sure there ought to be as we have waited so long for it, there will be, inevitably, initial damage. I think in terms of sacrificial areas it does need to be accounted for and dealt with. In terms of delay, delay to me means cost and I am very conscious of the tightness of the budget on the town park. So while I take the Connétable's point and would not wish the project to be rushed, I do not want it to cost any more.

**1.1.2 Deputy D.J. De Sousa of St. Helier:**

I thank the Minister for his reply this morning. **[Interruption]** I just wonder if the Minister would clarify... and I will meet with the Minister to discuss a way forward and if it is satisfactory then I will withdraw the proposition that is in place. I just wonder if he could categorically assure the Assembly and members of the public that he is 100 per cent sure that no child will ever be impaled on these railings because the designs that we have seen are really not very good.

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

I think it is unreasonable for anyone to expect me to give a 100 per cent assurance but in terms of design of the railings, I would like to think that they will be put in such a position that that will not arise. I have to say the primary reason - or one of the reasons - for the low railings around the Talman end of the park was to allow the formation of hedging which clearly takes some time. I suspect that after 2 or 3 years the hedging will subsume the railings and they will in time disappear completely.

**1.1.3 Deputy A.K.F. Green of St. Helier:**

Just widening the question but still with the Town Park. On Monday night we were surprised to hear that there was to be no changing place toilets in the park, which was part of the original plan. Since then, I am pleased to say, the Minister has confirmed to me there will be a changing place toilet, that is, a toilet for disabled people who need to have greater facilities than just wheelchair access. I wonder if the Minister would be good enough to confirm to the Assembly that there will be a ...

**The Bailiff:**

Deputy, I am sorry, this is an urgent question which was given specifically in relation to the question of railings, so I think we must confine ourselves to the urgent matter. **[Laughter]** I know the toilet can sometimes be a matter of urgency but ... Deputy Fox.

**1.1.4 Deputy J.B. Fox of St. Helier:**

Will the Minister give the assurance of re-approaching the States of Jersey Police with regards to design against crime in relation to these railings for the benefit of the security and safety of the people that will be living in and using the park? If there is any change, obviously. Thank you.

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

Yes, the department is in contact with the States of Jersey Police with regard to this and appreciate their input and hopefully that will be of benefit to all concerned. I would quickly just add that the department are happy to concede to Deputy Green's request in that design.

**1.1.5 Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier:**

Following on from what the Constable said, if the railings are going to be subsumed in a hedge, why go through all the expense of purchasing expensive railings, installing them and so on? Why can temporary railings not be put in until the hedge has been reinstated?

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

While I take the Deputy's point, and I am all keen for saving funds, I think it is important to ensure that there is a permanent safety barrier should the roads remain open, which is the crucial point. In terms of conscious conscience, if you like, it is difficult to accept an open area, and that could be caused by temporary railings, should the roads be opened, of having the risk of children running out into an open road. That really is of quite grave concern to me.

[9:45]

**1.1.6 Deputy D.J.A. Wimberley of St. Mary:**

Could the Minister just confirm that a key consideration in whether to have railings or not is whether that road on the north side of the park is open in the normal sense or is basically "residents only" or very restricted in access? Is that a key consideration in the future discussions?

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

Yes, it is.

**1.1.7 The Connétable of St. Helier:**

Again, I am grateful to the Minister for his approach on this in agreeing that the Talman end of the park will not have these railings ordered until the debate. Could he further confirm that the Millennium Town Park support group, who have worked tirelessly for over a dozen years and whose signatures amount to far more than 400, will be fully involved in the stages leading up to the opening on 16th October?

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

Absolutely. They are an essential part of the whole process of creating the town park.