

3. Questions to Ministers Without Notice - The Minister for Economic Development

3.1 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

Would the Minister confirm that the fuel companies have agreed to continue a supply of super unleaded petrol to those who need it and would he agree to issue a statement so that the public are made aware of how and where they can obtain this fuel, given that already some garages have ceased supply?

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

Yes, first of all, the fuel companies held a briefing for States Members which was very helpful in bringing this matter some clarity to it to Members. I am led to believe that the companies have indeed agreed to a limited supply of super unleaded to be continued. I believe that suitable fuel has been located and transportation put in place and that the supply should commence by April at the latest. Now, there are supplies in-Island prior to that so there should not be any shortfall. As far as a statement is concerned, I think it is probably more appropriate that this is publicised when indeed it is in place, which as I expect is going to be April. Whether a statement is appropriate I will make the decision nearer the time.

3.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Is the Minister aware of the fact that it is currently taking 6 days to clear both local and U.K. cheques when in the past it used to take 3 days and in the case of local cheques, we used to have a 2-day service? It used to be local clearing. Does the Minister think that at a time when many companies are struggling from a cash flow perspective that the banks should reintroduce local clearing rather than using clients' money for 6 days instead of just 2?

The Deputy Bailiff:

I am sorry, we have just become inquorate. Can I invite Members who are listening to these questions and answers being given in the coffee room to return to the Chamber as soon as possible?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

The Deputy raises a question about the clearance of cheques that I was not aware about. However, I am happy to look into the matter and revert to him with the facts of the position and indeed if anything can or should be done as a result.

3.3 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

On the subject of things disappearing, could the Minister inform the Assembly whether there is any news of anything materialising for our money in the fantasy film world?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I am not entirely sure I know what the Deputy is referring to but if he is referring to the fact that the Economic Development Department continues opportunities to generate on-Island employment and economic activity by supporting a film, then the position has not changed from the previous statements that have been made on that subject. We understand that matters are progressing and I am certainly hopeful that towards the latter half of the year, the production company has indicated that matters should start to commence and I hope that will be the case. I expect it to be.

3.4 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

Further to his previous answer relating to fuel, I wonder if the Minister could ensure that the message going out to the public does not fall between 2 stools if the Minister does not think the fuel companies are going to issue a statement by Thursday because I think it is an important

matter. There are people who have cars that cannot run on the other fuel and they do need to have information.

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Yes, the Deputy raises an important point. I am very happy to ensure that once the solution is finally in place, I am led to believe that there is going to be one which is clearly encouraging for the albeit minority of people that this affects, that that is indeed properly transmitted and I am sure it will be. For Members' interest, it is about 4 per cent of the fuel market that are affected by super unleaded. It is, however, an important area and therefore I appreciate the Deputy's question.

3.5 The Connétable of St. John:

Given the poor showing of the Rugby Club [**Members: Oh!**] is the Minister happy that the public funds were well spent and will he be reviewing the add-on payments year on year for the next several years?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I hope the Connétable is saying that he indeed himself supports the Jersey Rugby Club and indeed Jersey in their endeavours to be as successful as possible. [**Approbation**] I am sure that was what he was meaning. [**Laughter**] We are all very hopeful that the club will indeed be successful in the championship. Performances lately have been greatly improved and we all wish them well. As far as the performance from a sponsorship point of view is concerned, I am delighted with the results we have had. The numbers of people arriving in Jersey to watch Jersey Rugby Club and indeed their teams has exceeded our expectations to date. Not only have the numbers been larger than expected, they have stayed for longer and brought with them family members, wives and so on. So far we are led to believe it is a great success and we will be, of course, analysing it properly very shortly.

3.6 Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour:

Can the Minister explain why he thinks it exceptional that this Assembly has to wait so long for the new licensing law and when it is going to be delivered to this Assembly?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I do not think it is acceptable at all. As far as when it will come forward, this is a complex issue because unfortunately and I have said this many times before, although the legislation falls under Economic Development, there are other departments involved and there are a number of complex issues that need to be agreed upon. We are almost at a stage, I am pleased to say, to be able to issue a White Paper. I hope that that will be published within the next couple of months and then we can go forward from there.

3.6.1 Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Can I ask a supplementary? Can the Minister explain what he means by "hopes it will be lodged"? Will he not give greater priorities to make sure that the White Paper is going out within the next couple of months?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I said "hope" because it has been so long now. We have had to go through so many iterations and issues in this regard. I do expect it to be within the next few months that we get the White Paper out, and I will make it a priority. It has been a priority for some time.

3.7 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Could the Minister tell us why the Financial Services Ombudsman Scheme has not been brought to the House yet, because Guernsey some time ago was supposed to be ready to bring it in alone?

I know it is the view of the department that they wanted to work with Guernsey. So what is the hold-up? What is delaying?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

We are working closely with Guernsey on this. As it happened, we were slightly delayed because of the elections in Guernsey last year. We have now made good progress. I understand the proposition is going to be discussed internally by the relevant department in Guernsey in a matter of weeks. The intention, I understand, is that the matter will be laid before the States of Guernsey in April. We are still on target for the introduction of Financial Services Ombudsman in January or certainly the very early part of 2014.

[11:30]

The intention is, as the Deputy rightly points out, that it should be a pan-Channel Island Financial Services Ombudsman

3.7.1 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Supplementary. If Guernsey are going to table their legislation or discuss it with their departments in April, will the Minister also do a briefing for the States Members because if that is what they are discussing with their departments, it is more than likely what the final thing will be here once we have our law drafting sorted? So would he brief Members on what the proposals are?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Sorry; the Deputy misunderstood, or I was perhaps not clear enough. The department is discussing the principle. A lot of the legislative work has already been undertaken here in terms of preparation. It has been done in discussion with Guernsey officers, so they are simply approving the principle. It then goes to the States for them to agree. There is a matter of some detail that needs to be worked out yet. When that has been sorted then of course a suitable presentation to Members of the States of Jersey and others more widely will be introduced and offered.

3.8 Connétable J. Gallichan of St. Mary

Bearing in mind there has been quite a lot of talk about demonstrating Jersey as a value for money destination for tourists, can the Minister advise me whether there has ever been a sort of Jersey Card produced by the authorities giving travel concessions, entry concessions, *et cetera*, much on the lines that you see in major destinations across the world? If not, why not?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

There was in fact a product, the Connétable may be interested to know, called Jersey Card many years ago that sought to do that. It was seeking to enhance and utilise technology at the time. Sadly it was not successful. There have been a number of other passes and discount offerings in Island which are offered to tourists when they visit, and indeed tour operators and others do also promotional issues. The Connétable is right; we have to be more creative in a competitive market and indeed the industry does work very hard in order to deliver such initiatives and we work with them to help facilitate.

3.9 Deputy J.H. Young:

Could the Minister tell us what organisation he has in place to help him and the Island for long-term strategic thinking and planning for Economic Policy? Does he, for example, have a think tank of independent experts in place that he can draw upon?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

That process was undertaken last year and it led to the Economic Growth and Diversification Strategy. That went through an extensive consultation process and it was approved ultimately as the Deputy will know by the States of Jersey. We have established Jersey Business with a group, or a board I should say, of independent entrepreneurs. Again, that particular organisation is there to come forward with strategy to help the S.M.E.s (Small and Medium Enterprises) in the Island and indeed looking at things like access to funding and products. And indeed barriers that exist for the business community in Jersey, one of the biggest problems we have, are barriers in this Island - perhaps regulatory and other barriers that make it difficult and more expensive for businesses to operate and succeed. This is critical if we are going to not only sustain our economy but help to grow it in the future. We have to overcome that and be more accommodating.

3.10 Deputy J.H. Young:

The Minister did not mention the finance industry and the thinking for there. Could he just elaborate a bit? Is it Jersey Finance that does our thinking and promotion or do we have any external experts to guide us through the minefield?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Yes, indeed we have. We have invested considerably in recent times. Members should be reassured that an organisation of the standing of McKinsey and Company have been contracted to provide an oversight of the financial services industry and to look at the strategic position, the threats and opportunities that currently exist. That particular review is just concluding now and will be available shortly. That is a critical piece of work. We have also had Capital Economics looking at the value of the Island, in particular to the U.K. economy. In these challenging times that is a very important piece of work as well which is reaching completion. J.F.L. (Jersey Finance Limited) has fronted and co-ordinated both these pieces of work together with discussions that have been ongoing with industry. I should add that the regulators themselves have also been looking at the regulatory challenges within independent review that has been undertaken through the J.F.C. (Jersey Finance Corporation).

The Deputy Bailiff:

Very well. If there are no further questions we come now to the second question period for the Chief Minister.