

2017.01.17

13 Senator S.C. Ferguson of the Minister for Environment regarding planning and building policies applied to historic buildings used for residential purposes: [1(48)]

Will the Minister implement an independent review of the planning and building policies that are currently applied to historic buildings used for residential purposes, in other words family houses and, if so, when?

Deputy S.G. Luce of St. Martin (The Minister for Environment):

The planning policies for the management of change in historic buildings are set out in the Island Plan, which was approved by this Assembly. They were applied consistently to all heritage assets, including private homes that are of a special architectural and/or historic interest. The process of developing and adopting these policies was the subject of extensive consultation, scrutiny and review, including that of an independent planning inspector. I do not currently plan to review the Island Plan again until the end of the current planned period, which is 2020.

[12:30]

3.13.1 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Why does the department consider that they should decide into what era a family residence should be tied and why should they prevent a family using modern material where applicable?

The Deputy of St. Martin:

As I just stated, the planning policies applied by the department, my department, to managing change in historic assets are set out in the Island Plan approved by this Assembly, also are our building bylaws that are about energy conservation. I accept the criticism. I acknowledge that there is a tension between the objectives of preserving historic buildings and those that would save our energy. All I can say is where there is a conflict my officers, in both the Historic Environment Department and the Building Control Department, work as hard as they can to reach a compromise that is acceptable to both sides.

3.13.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

The Minister said his officers follow a consistent approach but that is not the case. When it comes to plastic windows the department have followed very strange policies. They have prosecuted some people for putting plastic windows in the back of a property, allowed others to put plastic windows in the front; we are talking about historic properties and others in the back. The policy is totally inconsistent and seems to come down to what the historic building officer seems to want. Will the Minister look into this because I can give him plenty of examples where his department's policy is not consistent?

The Deputy of St. Martin:

I did say that I was not going to review the Island Plan before the end of this term. But Members of the Assembly will be aware that I am committed to reducing red tape and I have already instigated quite a lot of work and changes to the permitted development order, which allows people to undertake work without permission from the department. I am currently working on increasing the General Development Order in the area of historic and listed buildings and Members will be aware that in the first 6 months of this year I will be allowing people to do more work on listed buildings without permission. I would ask any Members who wish to engage to speak to me about that. I return to the Deputy's question, which is inconsistency, and I say to the Deputy if he has examples, which he claims, I would be glad to see them.

3.13.3 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Given the article that I gave to the Minister earlier on about the work that has been done in Scotland, and they are always pretty ahead with things up there, will he look at that article and look at it in the light of using up-to-date materials and not tying residential properties into an era when they were built? This business about windows is quite important because it has come to a choice between restoring your house or freezing to death; you have to do something about it.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

I will commit to reading the article that the Senator has given to me and I will respond to her.