

2018.07.10

**3.8 Deputy R.J. Rondel of St. Helier of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the situation in respect of land at St. Catherine's that had been advertised for sale: [OQ. 86/2018]**

Will the Minister give an update on the current position of the land at St. Catherine's that was recently advertised for sale?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis (The Minister for Infrastructure):**

In response to the invitation to tender, the department by this stage has received 5 bids for the land; I am considering those bids. To better understand the protection the Island Plan provides to those fields, I am arranging to meet with the Minister for the Environment and Parish representatives this week. I expect to make a decision at my scheduled ministerial meeting on Friday and will report to the Assembly in accordance with Standing Order 168.

**3.8.1 Deputy R.J. Rondel:**

Has the Minister considered offering a very long lease to people such as the National Trust and maintaining the land for the public's benefit?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Everything is being considered at the moment. As I said, we are having talks.

**3.8.2 Deputy R. Labey of St. Helier:**

When the Minister says that he is going to make a decision, does he mean he is going to make a decision on the bids that have been received to purchase the land, or make a decision on whether the land should be sold off in this way?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Yes.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

I am sorry, Minister, I do not think that was an answer, because the question was asked in the alternative.

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

The decision has yet to be made; all options are open. Basically, the Minister is not bound to accept this, or any offer.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Can I ask if ...

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

Yes, indeed. Yes, Deputy, it is your question now.

**3.8.3 Deputy M. Tadier:**

In terms of an efficiency of approach to his workload, is it not a strange scenario to go out to tender to sell a piece of land if one has not even decided whether that is the course of action the department wants to pursue?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Absolutely. This was well in train before my taking over of the department.

**3.8.4 Deputy M. Tadier:**

In terms of a logical approach, does the Minister think that he should decide, first of all, whether he wants to sell that piece of land and, once that decision has been made, decide who to sell it to, rather than putting it out to tender and then deciding later on we do not want to sell, which wastes everybody's time?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

As I said, I am taking advice from experts and I will be consulting with the Parish authorities in St. Martin on this.

**3.8.5 Deputy S.G. Luce of St. Martin:**

The consultation with me is a bit of a surprise, but I will ask my question. The Minister has, in his power, the ability to make the decision. He has only had 5 tenders. Can he tell us how long it has taken him, thus far, to get to this stage?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

It has taken until now. There is a set procedure involved and I am following that procedure; that I get a report from the agents, which goes to Property Holdings and they write a report to me, making several recommendations. That report is now in; I am considering it. I will consult with various parties and make a decision.

**The Deputy of St. Martin:**

The question I asked was: how long has the Minister had the tenders in his possession?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

The tenders, I think, probably about a week and a half.

**3.8.6 Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville:**

Yes, I believe the closing date was 7th July, from memory. Could the Minister expand, perhaps, on the reasons for putting the land up for tender, especially when they were let out and the States were deriving an income from the farmer farming the land?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

My information was that the farmer had ceased farming the land. As I mentioned previously, the land was put up before my tenure at the Department for Infrastructure.

**3.8.7 The Deputy of Grouville:**

Yes, I realised it was before his time, but I wondered, while he is going through this process, if his department could have given him the reasons why the land was put up for tender, in the first place. The land was being farmed, but the farmer was given notice, not last Christmas, I believe the Christmas before, so that the States could put it up for tender.

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

I have obviously slightly conflicting information regarding the farming situation. But, as I say, this was in train for quite some time. Sorry, if the Deputy could repeat the first bit of the question.

**The Deputy of Grouville:**

I just wanted to know if he could expand on the reasons for putting the land up for tender.

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Yes, I thank the Deputy. My information from Property Holdings, which is the department holding the property, that it did not provide sufficient return for maintaining the land. It was originally a laying-out area for, I believe, St. Catherine's breakwater, back in the distant past, and was no longer required.

**3.8.8 Deputy R.J. Rondel:**

Would the Minister agree that if it was let to somebody like the National Trust, it could be done on a very long lease, very little admin cost to Property Holdings and it would be totally managed by the National Trust themselves and have no burden on Property Holdings, whatsoever? [**Approbation**]

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

As I said, all options are being considered and a decision will be made and the States will be informed.

**Deputy R.J. Rondel:**

Just to confirm, that would be on Friday, would it?

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

I am sorry, Deputy, that was the supplementary question there. You could always ask the Minister in the coffee room, or something like that, afterwards.