

2019.02.26

6 The Connétable of St. Helier of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the proposed merging of Liberation Square with Weighbridge Place: [OQ.55/2019]

Will the Minister advise how much has been spent thus far on the proposed merging of the Weighbridge with Liberation Square and what, if any, contingency plan for funding exists in the event that the Regeneration Steering Group decides that the project is not of sufficient priority to merit funding from the Urban Regeneration Fund arising out of profits from the States of Jersey Development Company?

[10:30]

Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour (The Minister for Infrastructure):

£100,000 has been spent to date in developing the scheme for joining Liberation Square and Weighbridge Place. The project is in engagement phase at present and as part of that process the project was presented to the Regeneration Steering Group on 11th January 2019. Funding of capital projects is the responsibility of the Minister for Treasury and Resources and not myself. G.H.E. (Growth, Housing and Environment) will deliver the project once the Minister for Treasury and Resources has determined a funding source.

4.6.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

I agree with the Minister that it is, in a way, not his responsibility to secure the funding for this, but given that his officers are working on what he calls an engagement phase - I am not sure if that means consultation because I do not believe that there has been any public consultation - is he not concerned that this may be abortive work if there is no money to pay for the project?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

The Constable raises an interesting point. The joining of the squares has been discussed for many years and the most recent proposal was included in the Future St. Helier Project Board list of prioritised projects, which confirmed the joining of the squares as a priority project, recommending funding be made available in the M.T.F.P. (Medium Term Financial Plan) 3, and I believe the Constable sat on that project board. I am at the mercy of the Assembly. I am merely the facilitator.

4.6.2 Deputy R. Labey:

What do the traffic surveys reveal as to the impact of this scheme on traffic in town?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

There will need to be adjustments made to the traffic flow, namely buses and taxis will need to take alternate routes. The cut-through, through to round by the Pomme d'Or, will be altered, obviously, and it will take possibly a few minutes extra if wanting to go east by cab or bus to circumvent the new Island route around.

4.6.3 Deputy R. Labey:

Has a traffic survey been conducted? What are the results and what consultation has taken place?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

That is a work in progress. As I say, the Traffic Department is well aware that there will be problems with this scheme which they are trying to mitigate.

4.6.4 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

The Minister said he is at the mercy of the Minister for Treasury and Resources. Will he tell us in detail then **[Interruption]** ... the Assembly. Have you had any discussions with Treasury on such a particular matter and, if so ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

Through the Chair, please.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Yes, Sir. Will the Minister advise the Assembly, please, what discussions he has with the Treasury on funding this particular thing and when those discussions took place?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

There have been preliminary discussions but Treasury have not signed it off and Treasury are seeking a funding route as to whether funding may be coming from S.o.J.D.C. (States of Jersey Development Company) as part of returns to Treasury or it may come from another route.

4.6.5 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

I did ask when. Would the Minister tell us exactly when these meetings or discussions have taken place?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Discussions are ongoing.

4.6.6 Deputy K.F. Morel:

Referring to the engagement phase that the Minister just mentioned, could he confirm whether that is indeed consultation and, in fact, whether because of the rushed nature of this programme, trying to get it finished in time for Liberation 2020, the consultation phase has, in fact, been if not entirely cut, reduced by a large amount?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

The Deputy is quite correct, we do have a target to meet, but there has been quite a bit of consultation with the surrounding businesses, surrounding hotels and obviously LibertyBus with the possibility of modifying some of the routes. As I say, talks are ongoing.

4.6.7 Deputy M. Tadier:

Will the Minister confirm that the project itself and the principle of the project is a very laudable one and that in Jersey we have a lack of large open spaces, particularly in the urban areas, where public events and the like can be put on and that this will ultimately be an asset to St. Helier and to Jersey and we should all be supporting it?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Absolutely. It will present itself as a suitable area for various events. Small marquees will be able to be set up there, orchestras, bands, *et cetera*. So I am looking forward to that but, as I say, we have a way to go yet.

4.6.8 The Connétable of St. Helier:

It is outrageous in a way for the Minister to imply in his reply to me, my last question, that this project is in some way a priority of the Future St. Helier Group. It certainly was not a top priority and he will know because the previous Minister abandoned Midvale Road improvements, which were the top priority. So for him to imply that this has somehow jumped up the priority list is completely misleading. Will the Minister undertake to be more transparent in publishing what is going on with Liberation Square because I do not believe the public know? The public certainly have not been consulted and my key concern is: where is the money coming from? At the moment, we do not know where the money is coming from. Will he agree to be more transparent about this?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I cannot be any more transparent than I am. I believe the Constable sat on the Future St. Helier Group so obviously he would know more about that group than I and how far up the list this was. But if it is not a priority then would he kindly state exactly where on the list this project comes? Because I have not seen many people that are against the project. As I say, obviously there will be problems with rerouting buses and taxis, *et cetera*, but I am more than happy to discuss that with the Constable, and I am 100 per cent transparent with this project.