

2021.09.14

2 Connétable K. Shenton-Stone of St. Martin of the Minister for Treasury and Resources regarding the Fiscal Stimulus Fund (OQ.185/2021)

Will the Minister advise what consideration, if any, has been given to the development of new funding models and strategies for the preservation and restoration of key cultural and historical buildings and landmarks in Jersey, particularly in light of bids for fiscal stimulus funding and related concerns expressed about the funding of arts, heritage and culture?

Deputy S.J. Pinel (The Minister for Treasury and Resources):

In 2019 the Assembly adopted Deputy Tadier's proposition to allocate funding to the value of 1 per cent of government net revenue expenditure to the culture, arts and heritage sector within the Government Plan. This funding can be allocated to ongoing maintenance and repair for historic buildings. The Government Plan process also identifies projects and allows them to be considered in respect of their individual and relative merits in relation to total funding available, which includes cultural and historic merits as valid consideration. In the current plan we are committing significant amounts for capital works and redevelopment at Elizabeth Castle to the tune of £750,000. To best determine how this funding should be allocated across the sector going forward, the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture commissioned 2 new strategies for heritage and the arts, which will be published later this year. Furthermore, as Minister for Treasury and Resources, through the Fiscal Stimulus Fund, I have supported 6 culture, arts and heritage projects, 5 of which are related to construction with a total value of almost £9 million of Government investment. No further funding models have been considered to date. Changes to this approach are for the next Government to consider in their Common Strategic Policy and subsequent Government Plan.

8.2.1 The Connétable of St. Martin:

Thank you, that is good to hear. We have got 12 iconic ancient buildings which are our Parish churches, which are so important to our heritage, surely these buildings should be given due recognition and it should be in all our interests to keep these magnificent buildings wind and watertight and in good order. Does the Minister for Treasury and Resources agree?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

Yes, of course I agree with heritage buildings being preserved and advanced and maintained. The Connétable refers to churches, these are largely dealt with by the Parishes but, as I say, any new funding applications will be for the next Government Plan.

8.2.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

I was concerned to hear the Minister say that the 1 per cent arts funding, which the Assembly agreed upon, can be used for capital expenditure. The proposition was quite clear, that the increase to 1 per cent of the Government's budget should be for revenue expenditure. Can she confirm whether this is now being used for capital expenditure?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

Yes, I said in my answer that it is revenue expenditure and it can be allocated to ongoing maintenance and repair for historic buildings.

8.2.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes, I do have a query there; the last part of the Minister's answer very much worries me. Does she not agree that ongoing building work and maintenance should not be coming out of revenue expenditure, which is designed for exactly that, and even more so organisations should not have to be applying for exceptional funding for maintaining assets which are, ultimately, owned by the public of Jersey?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

As with the Fiscal Stimulus Fund, all applications have to be made, it cannot just be the 1 per cent of Government revenue expenditure, it cannot be just dispensed without a business case and a valid reason for the maintenance and repair of historic buildings.

8.2.4 The Connétable of St. Martin:

I was worried about the Deputy's allusion to the churches being looked after by the various Parishes. These are historic buildings which are owned by the whole Island and are really important. I did put in a bid for the Fiscal Stimulus Fund, which was targeted, timely and it would have given a lot of work to different trades. I was told that we could probably use ratepayers' money to deal with this. I would have had to put the rates up exponentially to do this and I do not think I would have had anyone left living in St. Martin, if we could have managed to do this, so ...

The Bailiff:

I am sorry, Connétable, that was a speech, that was not a question.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

I am sorry, so I just ...

The Bailiff:

It was a final supplementary question and it does have to be. Thank you.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Yes, sorry. Sorry, Sir.

The Bailiff:

What is your final supplementary question?

The Connétable of St. Martin:

That I think that maybe Treasury should look at a different way of funding for the Parish churches, as they are iconic to the Island.

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

Yes, and I note the Connétable's question. The bid was made by St. Martin to the Fiscal Stimulus Fund and I was not part of the Fiscal Stimulus Oversight Group, I just acted on their recommendations and everybody had to produce a very solid business case in order to acquire funding from that.