



Economic and International Affairs Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Hearing

Witness: The Minister for International Development

Friday, 9th April 2021

Panel:

Deputy D. Johnson of St. Mary (Chair)

Senator S.W. Pallett

Deputy S.G. Luce of St. Martin

Witnesses:

Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville, The Minister for International Development

Mr. S. Boas, Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid

[11:08]

Deputy D. Johnson of St. Mary (Chair):

Good morning, everyone, and welcome to this public hearing of the Economic and International Affairs Scrutiny Panel with the Minister for International Development. Perhaps I could begin by, for the record, stating who is present on behalf of the panel; that is myself, Deputy David Johnson of St. Mary in the chair. We have with us Deputy Steve Luce of St. Martin and Senator Steve Pallett. Minister, perhaps I could pass over to you to introduce yourself and your officer.

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, Carolyn Labey, Deputy of Grouville, Minister for International Development. My officer, who I cannot see online at the minute, he was in the other meeting. You are? Okay, Simon Boas, he is Director of Jersey Overseas Aid.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Thank you for that and I note your earlier comment that we might have a truncated meeting, so let us quickly get on. One of the items we want to touch on is Island identity, which I am sure you have a lot to say on. But leaving that aside, could you give us an update as to current ongoing matters?

The Minister for International Development:

With Island identity or with the Jersey ...

The Deputy of St. Mary:

No, if I could leave that for a bit later because that is going to be quite a big topic; on other matters, if you could just touch on what else is going on in your world, please.

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, of course. Jersey Overseas Aid, obviously it is quite difficult to operate as we normally would expect to be operating because we were not able to travel and to monitor and evaluate our projects as we would like to the best part of last year. Luckily, the officers went out into the field in January of last year before any lockdowns occurred and so we were able to evaluate and choose our projects. Last year we had our project selection as normal. We would now like to get into the field to evaluate them and choose our projects for this year; that has been severely delayed, as you can imagine. As others, it has impacted elsewhere on how we operate obviously because we have not been able to do any community work projects last year and indeed we have just cancelled any prospect of sending volunteers anywhere this year. Yes, it has had quite an impact on us. However, we have our project selection for this year, we are just waiting for a window of where we are able to safely travel to selected countries. There is the project selection, obviously our emergency aid budget has had greater demands on it with COVID and we have been able to respond in that respect. Again, with local charities, many of you will know we do a lot of work with the R.J.A. and H.S. (Royal Jersey Agricultural and Horticultural Society). In fact we regard the dairy projects as our flagship nowadays. We are hoping to start to launch phase 2 of the dairy project in Malawi later on in this year because we have had so much success with phase 1 and, indeed, our other dairy projects with the R.J.A. and H.S. in Rwanda and Ethiopia. Other things we are doing, as I have touched on, the emergency aid has responded, our allocated budget and more than; so we have been able to sort of redirect some of the funding from, obviously, travel into our emergency response and specific responses to COVID. We have sent out £250,000 to the U.N.H.C.R. (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) to provide essential support for the refugees in Rohingya in Cox's Bazar, that is now the largest refugee camp anywhere in the world; 900,000 people. We have been able to send out emergency relief there and indeed send out some funding for the COVAX programme. We have been responding specifically to COVID and last year, as I say, some of our emergency budget went to specific emergency calls on our budget. In the beginning ...

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Sorry, Minister, while there is a pause there, I know that Deputy Luce had a question and in case it relates to a matter you already referred to, perhaps we could ask him to ask it now. Over to you, Deputy.

Deputy S.G. Luce of St. Martin:

Yes, thanks, Chair. Minister, yes, obviously really easy to appreciate that travel has been so difficult with all these COVID challenges. But on one hand you have not been able to go there to see your schemes in place but have your people on the ground in those places experienced problems with getting through your schemes because of their own local COVID restrictions on site?

[11:15]

The Minister for International Development:

Obviously they are not operating as normal but they still have people on the ground. For example, the U.N.H.C.R., when we are getting monies and to the pooled funding, they are in situ, so they are still operating. I will not say as normal but there are people out there working for the U.N. (United Nations) and elsewhere.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

You, I imagine, have got some schemes which are not pool-funded, which are specific schemes to you. Have the recipients been in a position where they have not been able to spend the money because they are restricted under their own national COVID challenges?

The Minister for International Development:

Not altogether. I will ask Simon to come in here; he might have more specific details. But obviously the big N.G.O.s (non-governmental organisations) are not sending people from the U.K. (United Kingdom) out there but there are partners on the ground which are able to operate. Obviously in emergencies they are used to working in emergency situations.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Yes, I appreciate that but I was thinking some of our schemes will be non-emergency schemes, they will be great schemes for physically building things or doing some type of work on site.

The Minister for International Development:

Sorry, I see what you mean.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Countries have got their own restrictions; that work may not have been able to have been undertaken because of COVID in the country where the money is headed.

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, sorry, I thought you were just talking about our emergency funding. With our grant aid, we chose not to start one of the projects, one of the dairy projects because we felt it was too difficult. We delayed that project to later on this year. It was meant to start last year. We were able to use the funding that we would have used for that project, we redirected it to the emergency budget specifically for COVID-related emergency.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Okay, thank you.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Sorry, before you start again, Minister, you mentioned the dairy projects and in that context Ethiopia; has the fighting there affected your project in any way?

The Minister for International Development:

No, but obviously because it is in a completely different area.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Okay, thank you. Sorry, we were interrupting you in full flow before, so please ...

The Minister for International Development:

No, I have just got another couple of things to mention for our general update and that is we have been able to launch a Jersey J.P.O. (Junior Professional Officer) programme, which is really exciting. It is giving 2 opportunities in fact because we have got 2 placements for local people to go and work for the U.N. We feel that is a career-changing opportunity for 2 local people and it is something that we hope to keep going every year. Probably the last update was just to say we have our intern, our fourth intern, who began working for us and did 2 months in our office in Jersey and is now working with the N.G.O. Send a Cow. No, I know what I forgot, sorry. We have partnered, as we usually do, with our conservation projects. We have partnered with Durrell Conservation Trust and it is an initiative, it is in the Atlantic Rainforest in Brazil and it is to re-wild. It is a carbon offset to re-wild and do some work in the Atlantic Rainforest, so we feel that is another exciting project that we have got going.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Thank you. Just going back to your sponsorship position in the U.N., that, I assume, is a relatively rare accolade awarded to a small jurisdiction like ourselves, is that right?

The Minister for International Development:

We put funding in too and some of the funding goes to their pooled funds. But because we put funding in we are given these placements and we get to choose the jurisdictions or we can select some jurisdictions that we would like our people to work in but it is a fantastic opportunity.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Forgive me, have we selected our jurisdiction?

The Minister for International Development:

We are probably choosing Lebanon. Yes, we have chosen Lebanon for that but the people have got to go through the interview process first.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Okay, thank you for that. Right, moving on. Not too many questions, other than the Island identity, but on the COVAX export to other countries, can you tell us what part Jersey is playing in all this?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes. When the pandemic struck we were called upon to respond over and above our pooled funding because our pooled funding can obviously respond immediately in selected countries because the N.G.O.s are there and set up. But specifically we responded in May of last year, with British Red Cross we gave monies to them; they were working in various countries, to Start Network, which is a pool-funding U.N.H.C.R. and International Health Partners, which operates in Gaza and Palestine. We responded and gave £535,000 in grants to those agencies initially because we wanted to wait and see because nobody really knew where or how the pandemic was going to evolve, so we held back a bit. In October of last year we responded with £1 million worth of funding and we responded to, again, various agencies that we work with, HelpAge International, Care International, medical aid for the Palestinians, British Red Cross, International Health Partners. We went into countries, Nepal, Yemen, Bangladesh and Ethiopia. We have responded quite specifically. This year we have responded to the COVAX programme, which is a programme which intends to vaccinate ... I have got the figure somewhere. Sorry, it is 1.3 billion people. We have responded to that programme by giving £200,000 to U.N.I.C.E.F. (United Nations Children's Fund) and £100,000 to British Red Cross.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Okay, there may be another question on that but I think Senator Pallett wants to come in, so over to you, Senator.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Yes, just briefly. Good morning, Minister. I am just interested, clearly you have got a lot of excellent partners that you already work with but in terms of moving forward travel restrictions could be with us for some time and some countries, clearly, are dealing with COVID better than others. I am just wondering, have you looked at maybe other ways that you can assess and monitor your projects moving forward, new ones and the current ones or ones that you are looking to invest in and look at the way you work as well? Is that something that you are currently looking at?

The Minister for International Development:

Obviously we have all taken to Teams, such is the need. We are able to talk to people in the offices in the various jurisdictions but obviously nothing can quite make up for seeing a project, seeing what it is doing, speaking to the recipients of the aid and assessing the needs ourselves. That having been said, we obviously rely on our partners that we are working with. But I am hopeful that our staff are going to be able to get out to these countries. Some of the countries that we intend to work with we are intending to give grants to this year, I am hoping they will be able to go and assess some of the projects later in April.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

But can I just follow off on that? If that proves difficulty with some projects, having staff from here visit overseas, will that hold up any projects or will you find other ways to try to allow these projects to move forward?

The Minister for International Development:

We will obviously try and allow the projects to move forward. It might mean that we have to go out at a later date to monitor and assess the projects. But I am hopeful that obviously we will comply with all the COVID restrictions and when the staff come back to the Island they will be isolated and we will obviously do everything that we should. But at the minute I do not think it will hold things up. It has held things up, like normally we go through this process in January, whereas now we will be finally choosing this year's projects in late May.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Just one other quick question, you mentioned COVAX and I think in Jersey we have had an excellent roll out, excellent take-up. Clearly, that is not the position in a lot of countries worldwide and we do need to play our part. Do you see Jersey investing even more moving forward in vaccination schemes around the world to assist?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, possibly. Emergencies hit and we assess things. For example, there was a fire recently in Cox's Bazar, so we responded to that. Most of our emergency funding goes into the pooled funding for Syria, Yemen and the African Republic, which are chronic places. We are able to sort of then make decisions about the current emergencies for the rest of our budget. Indeed, if we are unable to start some of our grant-aided budgets towards the middle of the year we might move some of the grant-aid monies into emergency monies, as we did last year.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Thank you, that is very reassuring.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Before we leave or perhaps move on to other things, can I just go back to the COVAX export and ask precisely how it works? Is our commitment just to fund the vaccine or does it come out of Jersey's share if there was a scarcity? Can you elaborate on that, please?

The Minister for International Development:

Jersey's share of the vaccines ...

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Share of the vaccine, I am just wondering, I take it that any contribution we make to the COVAX scheme, it does not affect Jersey's own share which it administers locally.

The Minister for International Development:

No, it does not at all; it is unrelated.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Thanks for that. Right, I think possibly we can now move on, perhaps we are going to be short of time.

[11:30]

Thank you for your kind offer to leave Simon in charge but I think that is against protocol or house rules, so ...

The Minister for International Development:

Seeing as he left me totally on my own in the last Scrutiny hearing ...

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

I was on leave.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I am not sure he can retaliate on this occasion. Perhaps we can move on. The Island identity, you kindly gave us a presentation last week but as we now have the advantage of a public hearing, could you just very briefly outline the motivation behind it and the objectives?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes. This was something the Chief Minister asked me to set up and so I set up a policy development board to look at our Island identity. Because there is a view, a shared view I have to say, that our identity is being diluted; it has been diluted over the last few decades. We feel that we have so much to offer. I formed a policy development board made up of 12 people and we wrote a document, which was a fairly rough and ready document, that touched on various subjects like our constitution, the Parishes, the environment, the economy, international. The objectives are really sort of to enhance our own identity here, to allow our children and people that come and choose to live over here an education programme so they can understand our history, our constitution, what we are about and also how others see us. On an international stage, what we are promoting on that international stage and, I hate to say it, we want to be known as more ... we are an international finance centre but are sometimes known as a tax haven, unfortunately. We want to develop that space, develop what we promote, whether it is through the dairy cow and the work that we are doing in Africa; there is so much talent in the Island, so many skills. We feel that this should be a platform where we promote ourselves. This work started when we knew we would be post-Brexit. Post-Brexit we need and should be considering ways of how we go about things independently, how we promote ourselves on the international stage, so that work is developing. We have now written a summary document and we are hoping to launch the project in the first couple of weeks in May.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Thanks for that overview. While I am on it, as it were, perhaps I ought to reject not your term, the term you used of a tax haven, which I think is outdated and misunderstood and I am afraid is used even by some charities, unfortunately. Thanks for that. I see from the summary of your views thus far, you have got 3 main objects or 2 which seem to be aimed at giving the local residential population their own identity as succinct from elsewhere and the other on the international stage. First with the local, do you think more could be done to embrace the Honorary Consuls in this project to try and persuade them that their nationals are assimilated and wish to be assimilated into the community?

The Minister for International Development:

Absolutely. In actual fact I sat on the COVID Community Task Force and one thing that became apparent as we were trying to work with everyone, get messaging out to the community, was some

consuls worked a lot better than others. It was easy to contact the Polish people living in Jersey. It was far easier to make contact with them than perhaps the Romanians. We feel that there is probably a job of work to do with the consuls because everybody that chooses to make Jersey their home should feel included, should feel welcome and we would like to offer to everyone sort of an education programme of what the Island is about. Even our schoolchildren, I am quite often alarmed at how little they know about their own Island.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I see Senator Pallett would like to ask a question.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

We mentioned Jersey's international identity but in terms of maybe redefining that identity. I think you share my wish that sustainable well-being is at the centre of a lot of decisions that Government make. I think all of us would like to see the Island really consider the well-being of its residents at the heart of many of the decisions and policies that we take forward. How do you see your role in redefining what we could be, with your colleagues, for example, on the Council of Ministers in trying to change their attitudes towards what Jersey could be accepted as in the future?

The Minister for International Development:

There is clearly a job of work to be done in Government with different policies and enhancing. With my colleagues I hope that they are all on board and in fact I took the first draft of the policy development board's document to them last July and I got approval in principle but got sent away to consult about it. But the Island's well-being, one of the questions we are asking Islanders to think about is how they would like to be seen on the international stage and how we want to be in the Island, on Island. If we want to be an island known for sustainable well-being, what we are doing for that, whether it is through sports, whether it is through nurturing a strong sense of citizenship, our summary document is asking people how they perceive themselves in the Island and how they would like their Island to be perceived by others. I think as regards sportspeople, it is just little things like when our sportspeople travel overseas, what message are they giving to other jurisdictions? Have they all got a similar emblem that identifies them as Jersey, that team are from Jersey? Is that sort of answering your question, Steve?

Senator S.W. Pallett:

It certainly is and I think sportspeople in the Commonwealth Games and Island Games Association have worked, I think, with sportspeople to make sure when they are abroad they are acting as ambassadors for Jersey. Do not get me wrong, I think we can still do more work on that. But I have got one little question and it is in a way controversial but it was highlighted at the Island Games in

the first medal ceremony where we won a gold medal in Gibraltar. What we got was Ma Normandie played, rather than ... what is the one that Sadie sings? I should know this, this is terrible, is it not?

The Minister for International Development:

Beautiful Jersey.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Beautiful Jersey. What is our current national anthem and should we really decide and stick to one, rather than having what happened in Gibraltar? Because I felt it was quite embarrassing for the athletes themselves.

The Minister for International Development:

It is and certainly this is one of the issues. The anthem has never been resolved. There was a competition, in fact I was involved with it, about 15 years ago and The Rock by Gerard Le Feuvre was chosen in that competition but for some reason it did not resonate with Islanders. It is a fantastic piece of music but it did not resonate. We are going to have to make a decision, what we consider to be our national anthem, Island anthem if you like, whether it is Beautiful Jersey, bring it to the States, make a decision and certainly Islanders learn the words. There is a job of work again to be done in the schools, so that all Islanders, no matter where you are from, can embrace what we stand for.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

I totally agree with you. Each piece of work has got its merits and they are all beautiful pieces of music but I think we do need to have that identity, I think, internationally and certainly our athletes I know want to have something that they can recognise and get behind when they are travelling abroad. Maybe there is a proposition in the air somewhere, hopefully not before too long.

The Minister for International Development:

Certainly in our initial report we came up with 50 or 60 ideas, opportunities if you like, but this was one of them, that the States really need to now decide on, not the States, the public need to decide on whether we hold a poll or whatever it is and it be ratified. Because, as you say, it is embarrassing for athletes that are sort of picking up their medals.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Yes, thanks.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Can I pass you on to Steve Luce now, who has been waiting a while?

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Thank you, Chair. I just want to keep going on the education subject, if I could. Minister, yes, you are quite right, if we had a national anthem people could learn it, children could learn it in school. I imagine that you would want to add some sort of Island identity to the local curriculum. But my question is: we have an enormous amount of pressure on items, subjects that people want to put into the curriculum and if you did put something in, which other subject are you going to drop? Because children only have a certain amount of time in school. Where do we go with the curriculum as regards Island identity and talking Jèrriaise?

The Minister for International Development:

That is a challenge and I think probably because education is so geared up for exams and the children's total *raison d'être* is to pass exams, rather than coming out as well-rounded human beings, I would suggest, but that might be another issue. My own children, when they had ... I forget what the subject is called, it was not there when I was at school. P.S.H.E. (Personal, Social, Health, Economic), that was it, so the idea was to teach Island politics in that programme. But we have an issue in this Island whereby some of the teachers do not necessarily know about our constitution, so we have got a job of training the trainers. We are mindful of the fact that there is not the material out there easily accessible. Hopefully, with the Island identity, one of the recommendations it is to sort of make or write something that is accessible for teachers, for schoolchildren, for people arriving in the Island. But to go back to your question, to fit it into the curriculum, for example, the Deputy Greffier has now been running the ... it is meant to be in the citizenship programme in schools. Years 5 and 6 come into the Assembly and they have their own debate and they learn about it. I would like to see that continued.

[11:45]

We have now set up the Youth Parliament, which highlights different ideas for the youth and young people to put forward. I think it was last week I chaired the Youth Assembly, which is the C.P.A. (Commonwealth Parliamentary Association). But my own children I know in P.S.H.E. were sometimes told to sort of get out their homework and get on with it during that time. It is being taught in a very random type way and I think we need to address that and we indeed do; it is one of the recommendations.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Thank you for that. I guess it is a bit of a chicken and egg situation, if you can get this information into the public domain, if you can collate the history, collate all the issues that you want to promote and people then have somewhere to go in order to access that information, that would be a great

start because I suspect at the moment that all these people, sportsmen, culturists, environmentalists, there is nowhere to go at the moment for that Island identity information on these subjects, so I thank you for that.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Picking up on that last point, if I may, it was previously the case, I think, or maybe it still is case that certainly on arrival there is a booklet available and in the days when conferences were more popular, certainly delegates were not swamped but given some general background as to what Jersey stood for. I sense that might have tailed off a bit in recent years. Is there something in hand regarding a general information pack which could be trotted out to clients of trust organisations, et cetera, and equally acceptable to the general tourist? Is the intention to have something fairly standard and available to all?

The Minister for International Development:

That would be the ideal. Obviously we have got to find somebody to write it. We have come up with suggestions like that, that we recognise that there is a range of things that we could do but a publication, a sort of universal publication, as you say, to be sort of when you pick up your social security card you get given a publication that can tell you about our constitution, the Parishes, the environment, history, what sports are available in the Island, what culture, that sort of thing. But to be available, as I say, when you pick up your social security card when you first come to work here, to be available in the schools, visiting dignitaries, visiting sportspeople elsewhere can take this as part of their pack because it is most certainly missing at the moment. You have only got to look at the airport, the departures where the Jersey offering is books on Bergerac and The Beast of Jersey and that is it. Really? There is a huge void to be filled here.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Okay, thanks. I see Steve Pallett would like to come back in again, so over to you, Steve.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Both yourself and Senator Gorst deal with international issues, albeit you have both got your own portfolios but what opportunities do you get to work together on issues, international issues and what discussions? Do you have an opportunity to discuss issues that sort of might cross over very often?

The Minister for International Development:

Certainly. It was not happening but I have recently instigated that we meet now every 3 months to discuss things. As I have said to the Scrutiny Panel in the past; aid and trade, I would like to see them separated because if they are amalgamated in any way the 2 compromise one another, so they are separate. However, some of the countries we go to, Rwanda, for example, we do business

in, we have aid, they do business, we could certainly work together because I think it is a really good thing for Senator Gorst to know of the projects that we have in various countries, especially if they are visiting them. I think it is essential that he is fully briefed on that. Certainly with the Island identity, to sort of promote ambassadors of the Island, people going there, our volunteers, his staff going to countries, we need to sort of have an ambassadors' programme set up so that people can speak about the Island with knowledge. Yes, so to answer your question we have started meeting more recently and, yes, I think there is synergy and things that we can share with one another.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Going off at a slight tangent, with some of the work that you have done or your department have done internationally, have any human rights issues come up in some of the countries that you have been working in where that would be of an interest to Senator Gorst in terms of some of the work that he does or is that something that you try not to ... you cannot avoid it, human rights issues are human rights issues but is that something that you ever discuss?

The Minister for International Development:

I do not know if you are aware as to how we choose our countries. Human rights is one of the issues that we look at and certainly corruption is another one that we take into consideration about the countries that we support. We take great heed in the corruption perception index. When we deal in-country we are not a bilateral donor, so we deal with the N.G.O.s, as opposed to the Governments.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Yes, okay, thanks.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I think Steve Luce would like to follow the same line of questioning, if you may.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Yes, just a very quick question, Minister, if I may and I think it would have been Senator Ozouf in previous governments but we have had initiatives where we have been contacting our diaspora around the world and like Jersey people who are in a position to promote the Island. Have you been in contact with those people as well because obviously your work that you are doing here, the information you are going to put together, would be of great use to those people who are Jersey and situated all over the globe?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, that is a really good point. In the Island identity document we recognise that there is a need to promote ambassadors for the Island but they come in very, very different forms. They do not only

come from the people from Jersey who are visiting countries elsewhere, they are not only the people on Island who are greeting visitors but they are very much the Jersey people or people that might have spent some time here who are now living all over the world. This is something that we do recommend that a database be set up and almost a newsletter to keep people in contact whereby we know who they are, if they want to be contacted obviously and want to be kept informed. I think it is a very important thing internationally to have that information, to have willing ambassadors all over the world that are prepared to sort of sing about our Island.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Yes, I could not agree more. I just hoped that there might have been some data available from a few years back but maybe not. Okay, thank you.

The Minister for International Development:

With that regard, I think the Jersey London office was setting up a database of our students that go over to the U.K. and I think some of the Jersey London Society but whether it has been all brought together. People need something, so if we could keep in touch with them by sending a newsletter to them and so it is a 2-way thing, they can continue telling us where they are and what they are about.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Okay, thank you.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Yes, picking up on that same theme, I have to say that when I have gone to meetings at the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly the London office have been very helpful in providing information. I am sure material is there and it may just be that it needs to be better identified and will need to better identify the people who should receive it. But, more generally, I see we are sort of getting towards the end, again, following on from what has just been spoken about, I see that one of your goals, goal 6, I think it is, developing Jersey's distinct international personality separate from that of the U.K. but with strong connections to Britain, France and the European countries and the Commonwealth. Do you think that post-Brexit that goal has increased in importance and is that something you are working hand in glove with, with the Minister for External Relations and Financial Services?

The Minister for International Development:

It is. The Island identify work, I feel, is so vital now. Post-Brexit Jersey has got to start promoting ourselves. We do not know how things are going to pan out with the City of London, I mean in the financial services. We could very well be in competition with them, with the services that we are

providing. I think it is imperative that we look globally at our own opportunities. We were looking last year or the year before to New Jersey whereby we twinned with them. Our contacts through the C.P.A., British-Irish Council and our Francophonie. I think post-Brexit this work is absolutely essential.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Okay. I just make the comment that Jersey being a third country as far as the E.U. (European Union) is concerned, I like to think that London will not so much see us as a competitor but as one with whom they can work in the E.U. but that is by the way. Yes, we are getting towards the end of our time. Can I ask my colleagues if they have got any final questions to ask? It is a big subject and I am sure we will come back to it.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

I am fine for now, thank you, Chair.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

I have just got a very quick one, I am just interested in within your stakeholder engagement for your Island identity document you did note that you had engaged with the Government in Malta. I am just interested in what sort of feedback you had from them and I presume it is around some of the work that they possibly were doing with their identity.

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, and, interestingly, I think it is the island of Malta have a very high civic engagement, I think something like 97 per cent of their population vote, which is quite impressive. I think we could learn quite a bit from them and I think it was the island of Malta that identified to us some years ago, how did they turn their tourism around? I think they got Ryanair in and we got easyJet. Yes, I think we have got a lot to learn. But, again, on the C.P.A. the small countries and the British-Irish Mediterranean region, we get the opportunities to network with the Maltese and other small islands; Cyprus, Gibraltar. Yes, we have got a lot to learn and indeed a lot to give, a lot to share.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Just another very quick question and I think the answer will be yes, I know you are a big supporter of the C.P.A., do you work with our colleagues if they are going away in terms of supporting them and providing them any information or anything that they can do to support Jersey's identify?

The Minister for International Development:

I chair it, Steve, so I chair the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in Jersey.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

That is why now you had such a great interest in it.

[12:00]

The Minister for International Development:

Indeed and this is one of the recommendations of the Island identity, anybody travelling, whether it be our volunteers on Jersey Overseas Aid, whether it be sportspeople, whether it be the C.P.A. representatives, they all need to sort of go through this ambassadors' programme, for want of a better description, so that, firstly, they have the knowledge but, secondly, can promote the Island.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Thank you, nothing else from me.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Okay. Finally on this, and I have the benefit of having seen a summary or more than a summary of the interim findings of the Island Identity Policy Development Board, could you give us a timeframe within which something might be published for the general public?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, sure. We are hoping to launch in Jersey Week, so that is the beginning of May, whereby we are at the minute trying to put those 2 documents up on a website and we will be launching the website during Jersey Week.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Thank you. I am not sure I am as familiar with the term "Jersey Week", so that is an immediate benefit, is it, of your board?

The Minister for International Development:

Absolutely, I have just invented it.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Okay, thank you for that. I am sure we have got many more questions to ask. I am sorry too that we cannot take advantage of Simon's presence but given your timetable we will ...

The Minister for International Development:

Simon is here ready and waiting for any questions. Simon is online ready and waiting if you want to fire some questions at him.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

We are unable to ask them of him unless you are there too, that is the point. We cannot carry on with him in isolation; that is what I am getting at.

The Minister for International Development:

I think we have got 5 more minutes.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I am not sure, I think we have sort of probably wound down now, unless either of the Steves have got any further questions, I think we will. Yes, thank you for your time and that has given a forte as to what is to come. I am sure we will be reverting back to you on this subject and, yes, we await the publication.

The Minister for International Development:

Yes.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Sorry, Chair, could I just take up the Minister's offer of one last final question and she will probably hate me for this? No, it was just around COVID and in countries far away where COVID is a problem, just like it has been for us and continues to be, do you see COVID becoming your main priority? For example, would you consider putting aid into a particular country for their COVID work, as opposed to putting aid into that country for some of the more usual type of projects that you would do? In other words, does COVID become a bigger priority overseas for you than your normal overseas type projects?

The Minister for International Development:

No, is the answer to that. We have 3 themes that we give grant aid to: dairy, conservation and financial inclusion. We chose those specifically to draw on Jersey's strengths because instead of just giving cash we feel on those 3 topics we can give a value added. We have got expertise in dairy and genetics, so we can give so much more there. We have got Durrell, so our work on conservation, we can rely on them as our experts on Island. Obviously we have the infrastructure for an international finance centre, so we can offer so much more. COVID, last year and this year, comes out of our emergency funding and, hopefully, as the vaccine gets rolled out we will become ... I do not suppose we will ever get rid of it but with a proper vaccination programme in place, which we are contributing to with our emergency funding, hopefully, that will just remain as in our emergency funding. But, no, to answer your question. I do not know if Simon wants to add anything to that.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Thank you.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Just to say that that is absolutely right but obviously if we think of COVID in the wider sense it is not just the public health effects of COVID in developing countries but the huge damage it has done to their economies as well. Africa may have lost about 4 per cent of G.D.P. (gross domestic product) last year, which is huge for already poor people. To the extent that all of our work, essentially, has the goal of poverty alleviation, we are addressing problems caused by COVID but, as Carolyn has said, not necessarily focusing on the health angle but on economic development.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I see that you did, Minister, kindly offer to take further questions and Steve Pallett has one more for you as well.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Just a very, very quick one. I certainly understand your 3 core principles around finance, dairy but we are beginning to grow other industries here. Is that reviewed and I am just thinking of something like digital, for example, which could be a key economic driver in some of the countries where you work? Do you look at other areas where we could add value as well to some of the work that we do?

The Minister for International Development:

On the Commission we have just about developed our strategic plan and these are the 3 things that we have chosen to give strength to. But digital, we rely quite a bit on digital with financial inclusion; they are the mobile phones. The Africans are able to do their banking and get microloans and that sort of thing on their phones. It does lend itself a bit to the digital sphere. But we like to consider, we keep an open mind on things and if Jersey sort of could offer something in particular to a jurisdiction, then we would always consider it.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Brilliant, thanks.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Again, I am sure we have got lots of questions we could keep on for ever and a day but in view of your own requirements, Minister, we will perhaps close it now. Can I thank you both for attending?

We look forward to hearing further on the Jersey passport or whatever you like to call it and with that I will close the meeting, if I may. Thank you, both.

The Minister for International Development:

Okay, thank you very much.

[12:08]