

Scrutiny Panel: **Education and Home Affairs**

Introduction:

I welcome the Scrutiny Panel report which not only recognises the successful operation of Fort Regent by the Education, Sport and Culture department but also the need to develop an overall strategy for Fort Regent and the surrounding area. I am particularly encouraged by the views expressed by the public and, the clear support shown for Fort Regent by the majority of those who took part in the review.

I acknowledge the difficulty in achieving some of the recommendations but accept that we should be working to resolve the long standing issue of the Future of Fort Regent. Ultimately, success will be dependant on the States determining whether this project is considered to be a priority as resources will undoubtedly be required for any redevelopment of the site.

Findings

	Findings	Comments
1	<p>FINDING 1: 4.1.3</p> <p>The Panel found that there was no current formal and ongoing dialogue between the Department for Education, Sport and Culture, Property Holdings and the Jersey Heritage Trust. The Panel was concerned that this would contribute to a neglect and deterioration of the historical features of Fort Regent.</p>	<p>This is not accepted</p> <p>Dialogue does take place between ESC and JPH on all property matters including Fort Regent and it is accepted that the future of the whole site needs to be considered by both parties. Any development proposals will need to consider the views of all interested parties including JHT. This process will ensure that historical features of the premises will be taken into account as and when any development is proposed. Furthermore any future development of Fort Regent will need to be considered as part of the resource allocation process which covers all of the States Estate</p>
2	<p>FINDING 2: 4.2.1</p> <p>As a tenant the Department of Education Sport and Culture has implemented and maintains an impressive Sports and Leisure Facility despite the physical constraints of the Site. However, it is evident to the Panel that there is a lack of clarity between each Stakeholder as to their individual responsibilities for Fort Regent.</p>	<p>Recognition of the work done by ESC is noted. It is not accepted that there is lack of clarity between stakeholders although it is recognised that departments place a different emphasis on their roles and responsibilities.</p>
3	<p>FINDING 3: 4.2.2</p> <p>The existing website for Fort Regent is currently housed within the States of Jersey website. The Department of Education, Sport and Culture is working with Information Services to develop an improved website and on-line booking system across the cultural bodies, with completion scheduled</p>	<p>It is agreed that the progress has been slow in this area however the department is confident that on line bookings for shows and events will be in place early in the New Year.</p>

	for the end of 2009. It is the Panel's opinion that progress on revamping this system has been too slow.	
4	FINDING 4: 4.2.3 Since the conversion from Pay and Play to the Active Card Scheme the Department of Education, Sport and Culture has recorded a marked increase in the number of people that participate on a regular basis. This has not only benefited Fort Regent as a Leisure Facility but the community as a whole.	The finding is noted and agreed.
5	FINDING 5: 4.2.4 The Department of Education, Sport and Culture has reinvested revenue gained through the success of the Active Card Scheme. Evidence of this is apparent in the new reception area and fitness section. Energy Efficiencies have been implemented throughout the site and form an environmentally compatible policy in line with the Strategic Plan 2009 – 2014.	The finding is noted and agreed.
6	FINDING 6: 4.2.5 While there is evidence of a steady decline in Conferences held at Fort Regent over the last five years, expansion of concert/entertainment events has proved successful. However, the multi-use nature of facilities at the Fort has meant that increasing levels of demand brought about by this rise in the number of events, has placed enormous pressure on both Sports Clubs and Centre Staff.	The finding is noted, Due to the multi use nature of facilities coupled with increasing levels of demand it is acknowledged that for those responsible in managing the facility to best benefit as many people as possible certain pressures are inevitable.
7	FINDING 7: 4.2.7 The success of the Active Card Scheme has enabled the Department of Education, Sport and Culture to provide a service to the community through promotion of Social Inclusion. By way of example, the Exercise Referral Scheme is currently making a significant contribution to the well being of many islanders who would otherwise be costing the States of Jersey much more in the long term.	The finding is noted and agreed.
8	FINDING 8: 4.2.8 In spite of what must be acknowledged as a 'lack-lustre' catering experience, perhaps in terms of setting rather than choice, the reality is the existing catering does meet the demands of the restricted group of mums and toddlers, who currently use it.	The finding is noted.

<p>9</p>	<p>FINDING 9: 4.2.9</p> <p>The Panel believes that it is not currently appropriate to actively advertise the Fort as a tourist destination whilst it remains limited by way of things to do or see there.</p>	<p>The finding is noted and agreed. This issue needs to be considered in the development of an overall plan for Fort Regent and the surrounding area.</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>FINDING 10: 4.3.1</p> <p>The Panel found that conditions agreed during the development of the AquaSplash Leisure Facility fatally undermined the future of the Fort Regent Swimming Pool, as a family based Leisure Centre, and ensured that no swimming facility could be redeveloped at the Fort.</p>	<p>It is accepted that following the decision to provide a leisure pool on the waterfront no public swimming facility can be provided at the Fort.</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>FINDING 11: 4.3.1</p> <p>A lack of strategic planning by the States of Jersey, at that time, meant little consideration was given to the consequences of closure of the Fort Regent Pool, which has subsequently hamstrung any development across the site. The Panel agrees that closure of the pool was a fundamental mistake, which has had an unquestionably negative impact on footfall at Fort Regent.</p>	<p>Whilst it is agreed that there has been a negative impact on the footfall it is not accepted that the closure was a fundamental mistake. The need for a leisure pool facility was identified and, following advice that it was no longer viable to maintain the Fort Regent Pool, decisions were made to incorporate a tank in the building of the pool on the waterfront. It should be noted that there are more than adequate swimming facilities in the Island provided by both the public and private sector.</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>FINDING 12: 4.3.1</p> <p>Currently there is a distinct failure by the States to address the redevelopment of the swimming pool site and agree to any future plans.</p>	<p>It is accepted that progress has been slow in identifying a suitable use for the old swimming pool site as it hasn't been considered a priority. Work has however been undertaken by JPHD in order to determine ways of moving this forward.</p>
<p>13</p>	<p>FINDING 13: 4.3.3</p> <p>The Department of Education, Sport and Culture and Jersey Property Holdings (JPHD) are both responsible for the internal and external upkeep of the site. In the last year the maintenance schedule agreed between the Departments has highlighted that Fort Regent remains a low maintenance priority for JPHD.</p>	<p>The finding is accepted but it must be recognised that JPHD have significant demands on their limited resource which is hampering progress in many areas.</p>
<p>14</p>	<p>FINDING 14: 4.3.4</p> <p>Following the closure of many of the activities located around the Ramparts, they were left to deteriorate to such an extent that it was essential to close off several of the areas due to the risk they posed to members of the public. Closure of these facilities has, in turn, reduced Fort Regent's market share. The Centre has become less public facing and lost its attraction to families</p>	<p>The decision to close many of the facilities was based on the fact that they were old and needed significant reinvestment. As a result a significant reduction in the annual revenue budget required to support activities at the Fort has been achieved allowing ESC to focus on the primary use as a sports, leisure and entertainment centre. It is accepted that improving access to the Fort is one of the key elements which need to be addressed in any future redevelopment.</p>

<p>15</p>	<p>FINDING 15: 5.1.3</p> <p>Despite recommendations in previous reports and feasibility studies over the past ten years, there have been no attempts to pursue Public Private Partnerships for development purposes. Conflicting arguments were submitted with regards to the possibility of Commercial Development at Fort Regent. However, the most favoured opinion was that inviting private partners would be beneficial to developing certain aspects such as a moderately priced hotel.</p>	<p>It is agreed that at present there has been limited consensus as to the future of the Fort. The development of a single agreed plan for the whole site will enable progress to be made in this area. Approaches have been made to Leisure providers in the past but to date there has been no firm interest from Private Public Partnerships in developing Fort Regent. This issue will need to be considered together with appropriate funding being made available prior to bringing forward future proposals for the site.</p>
<p>16</p>	<p>FINDING 16: 5.1.4</p> <p>In the search for a department or person responsible for development at Fort Regent, the Panel concluded that there was no clear political or officer accountability. The absence of a 'Champion' for Fort Regent was thought to be one of the explanations for the deterioration of the site. The Panel believed that future development of the Fort requires much greater political motivation in order for progress to be made.</p>	<p>It is agreed that greater political motivation is needed to progress any future development. Although there has been some deterioration of the site there has been significant development of the internal aspect of Fort Regent which has supported the success that has been achieved and recognised by the panel.</p>
<p>17</p>	<p>FINDING 17: 5.1.5</p> <p>Interpretation and care of the historic fabric has been substandard to date. Lack of consultation with the Jersey Heritage Trust and failure to address recommendations in the Conservation Statement by Antony Gibb has meant a continued absence of comprehensive historical interpretation.</p>	<p>The finding is noted. This issue is one of many that needs to be taken into account in future development opportunities. The views of all interested parties including JHT will be considered in any future proposals for the site.</p>
<p>18</p>	<p>FINDING 18: 5.1.6</p> <p>The Panel reviewed past reports and feasibility studies produced over the last ten years and found that follow up to the reports had been minimal despite many realistic recommendations and notable common ground contained within them. It was apparent that there was limited consensus as to future of the Fort between the different Stakeholders involved and therefore no single agreed plan despite numerous reports.</p>	<p>The finding is accepted. The combination of limited consensus as to the future of the Fort coupled with a lack of resources has hindered progress in this area. If the redevelopment of the site is to be a priority a single agreed plan needs to be developed supported by appropriate resources.</p>
<p>19</p>	<p>FINDING 19: 5.2.3</p> <p>The Panel was not satisfied that there was enough evidence to suggest that Fort Regent would make a viable conference centre, and would not support an investment for such a development, that would be unlikely to make a viable return. They suggested that any future plans regarding development of a conference centre at the Fort would need appropriate analysis of the market for large conferences, including</p>	<p>The finding is agreed. This issue will need to be considered in more detail and should form part of any redevelopment proposal.</p>

	consultation with hoteliers to identify impact.	
20	FINDING 20: 5.2.4 All round improvement of facilities and access would be necessary to create a suitable environment for an upgraded restaurant.	The finding is agreed. Dependent on the outcome of any redevelopment proposals a range of catering facilities could be required to support visitors to the site.
21	FINDING 21: 5.2.5 The Ramparts are one of the most neglected areas of Fort Regent. Regeneration of the Ramparts could be seen as a small scale project that could make a huge impact. Jersey Tourism should play a key role in the promotion of the site once it is maintained to a satisfactory level.	The finding is noted. It is accepted that Jersey Tourism would need to be involved in any redevelopment of the Fort. Regeneration of the ramparts cannot be viewed in isolation and should be addressed as part of an overall plan for the Fort.
22	FINDING 22: 6.1 The Department of Education, Sport and Culture has, on the surface, shown to be successful in reducing the size of subsidy required for Fort Regent. However, the Panel believes it is not easy to provide a thorough analysis of the Fort's historical financial situation due to the lack of meaningful financial data held across several different accounting systems, as well as the time and resources that would be needed to interpret it. On this basis the Panel feels that it is hard to be conclusive either way with regards to financial justifications for closure of facilities at Fort Regent due to the barriers to appropriate analysis.	The finding is noted. Although considering historical data can be useful the Island economy has changed over time and has been one of the contributing factors in decisions made to close certain facilities at the Fort. It should be recognised that the level of the subsidy required has been reduced and any additional funding will be linked to any future plans for the site.
23	FINDING 23: 6.3 The Panel was advised that there were currently no alternative funding streams for the development of Fort Regent, thus significantly affecting any progress. In light of this the Panel found the final decision not to apply for Fiscal Stimulus Funding completely inexplicable and felt that both the Department of Education, Sport and Culture and Treasury and Resources, on behalf of JPHD, were negligent in not seeking funding.	It is not accepted that ESC was negligent in not applying for Fiscal Stimulus funding. Presently there are no approved development plans for Fort Regent and as such the criteria for accessing Fiscal stimulus funds would not be met. It should be noted that there are presently a number of projects that JPH and ESC consider to be a higher priority than the Fort which in turn are required to compete with other proposals brought forward by other States departments.
24	FINDING 24: 6.4 The Panel is concerned that the new rental structure to be applied by JPHD may not take into account matters of social benefit and inclusion.	The new rental structure between JPHD and ESC will be designed to ensure that social benefit and inclusion are taken account of under the new policy.
25	FINDING 25: 6.5 Fort Regent shares a limited maintenance budget with two	The finding is accepted

	other Leisure Centres (Les Quennevais and Springfield). The Fort also competes with a lengthy priority list of JPHD and suffers as a result.	
26	FINDING 26: 7 The Panel found that Fort Regent has poor directional signage both leading up to and within the site. The Panel also concluded that access to Fort Regent is inadequate and needs to be improved.	The finding is accepted and will be considered in any future improvements to the site.

Recommendations

	Recommendations	To	Accept/ Reject	Comments	Target date of action/ completion
1	RECOMMENDATION 1: 4.1.3 The Panel recommends that the relationship between the Department of Education, Sport and Culture, JPHD and the Jersey Heritage Trust be put on a formal footing. The Panel request the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture to establish a working group, lead by a politician or 'champion' and consisting of representatives from these departments and key Stakeholders.		Accept	I accept the establishment of a working group and am willing to take a lead role. Meetings to discuss the make up of the group with key stakeholders are being arranged.	March 2010
2	RECOMMENDATION 2: 4.2.1 The Panel requests that the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture work with the Minister for Treasury and Resources to identify the exact requirements needed by the Department of Education, Sport and Culture and JPHD to maximise the potential of the Fort, including budgetary requirements, so that there can be a clear definition and transparency of roles and responsibilities.		Accept	I accept that there is a need for both Ministers to work together in order to clarify requirements prior to the development of a single agreed plan for Fort Regent and the surrounding area. This should include a clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of the departments involved.	July 2010
3	RECOMMENDATION 3: 4.2.2 The Panel recommends that the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture instructs the current working group, consisting of the States Central I.T. and the Department of Education, Sport and Culture's I.T. Department, to investigate development of a standalone website for Fort Regent with an online booking system, that is no longer buried within the States of Jersey Website.		Reject	I am confident that the new arrangements to be implemented early in 2010 will adequately provide on line bookings for concerts and events to meet the needs of Fort Regent and other similar local providers.	March 2010

4	<p>RECOMMENDATION 4: 4.2.7</p> <p>The Exercise Referral Scheme is of great benefit to the community and must be supported, maintained and developed. The Panel requests that the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture ensure that the scheduled Business Plan cuts, which impact on this area, are not made.</p>		Accept	<p>I agree that the Exercise Referral Scheme is of great benefit and I aim to ensure funding is maintained. Following discussions with H&SS there will be no cuts as identified in the Business Plan.</p>	Immediate
5	<p>RECOMMENDATION 5: 4.3.1</p> <p>The Panel recommends that the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture must organise for the abandoned swimming pool on the Glacis Field to be demolished with immediate effect.</p> <p>The Panel further recommends for an Engineering Condition Report to be carried out on the derelict swimming pool site together with investigations into possible future uses of the site. The Panel suggests that investigations should include consideration of a swimming pool with possible incorporation under a hotel development, taking into account the current contractual restrictions.</p>		Reject	<p>The funding to demolish the pool is not available. ESC will work with JPHD to develop an agreed plan for demolition taking account of any future development on the site.</p>	
6	<p>RECOMMENDATION 6: 4.3.4</p> <p>The Panel recommends that immediate attention must be paid by the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture to the maintenance of the ramparts. Tidying up of closed areas, demolishing old unused buildings such as the Cable Cars together with installation of historical interpretation are all quick wins which would make a huge impact to the attractiveness of Fort Regent.</p>		Reject	<p>I will work with JPHD and other key Stakeholders to agree plans for the whole site. Consideration will be given to a phased approach where appropriate for any proposed development..</p>	
7	<p>RECOMMENDATION 7: 6.1</p> <p>The Panel recommends that the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture ensures attention is paid to making the historical financial data in relation to the Fort as transparent and interpretable as possible. The Panel feels that it is imperative for the Department to understand and learn from the changes over recent years especially if there is a danger of decisions being made on meaningless data.</p>		Accept	<p>Although the data is produced under different accounting systems it is not meaningless. I am confident that recent data is accurate and is able to be used to reliably inform future decisions about development.</p>	July 2010

8	<p>RECOMMENDATION 8: 6.3</p> <p>With regards to the limitations placed on development by the stated lack of funding available for Fort Regent, the Panel requests the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture to implement the exploration of opportunities for Public/Private Partnerships and also to investigate the feasibility of redirection of money from disposal of properties.</p>		Agree	<p>During the development of an overall plan for the Fort and the surrounding area, one of the responsibilities of the working group will be to identify how any future development will be funded. This will include proposals made by the Panel and contained within the recommendation.</p>	July 2011
9	<p>RECOMMENDATION 9: 7.0</p> <p>The Panel recommends that the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture instruct that access to Fort Regent be urgently re-examined with particular attention paid to the development of a lift from Snow Hill up to Fort Regent. In addition improvements to directional signage across the site need to be made with immediate effect.</p>		Reject	<p>I accept that improved access and signage would help to encourage more people to the Fort however both these issues need to be considered by the working group prior to any changes being made.</p>	<p>July 2011</p> <p>March 2010</p>

Conclusion

ESC fully support the need to consider the future of Fort Regent however before departments undertake any further work on the redevelopment of the site, the States need to decide whether it is prepared to prioritise this particular project above others.