

Deputy David Johnson
Chair
Economic and International Affairs Scrutiny Panel
By email

16th February 2022

Dear Chair,

Re - Arts Strategy and Heritage Strategy

Thank you for your letter dated 8th February 2022. Please find below responses to the questions the Panel have raised:

The Opera House was originally due to reopen in the summer of 2022, but having reviewed its condition and considered the volume and complexity of the restoration, this has now been revised to June 2023. How confident are you that this date can be achieved?

The Government of Jersey (GoJ) has appointed Colin Smith Partnership (CSP) as its Project Manager and Quantity Surveyor for the Jersey Opera House (JOH) refurbishment.

CSP has partnered with HLG Consultants in the procurement and supply-change management process of the project. HLG developed the procurement strategy and invitation to tender for the Integrated Design Team. HLG, working with the Integrated Design Team, is confident that the works will be complete by the end of June 2023.

It is stated that the work had been originally scheduled based on estimates, but experts have now been able to fully review the condition surveys against the proposed schedule of works. Could you explain why work was carried out on estimates and not actuals?

The original condition surveys - building fabric, mechanical and electrical, drains and fire risk assessment were undertaken by construction professionals over the summer of 2019. The estimates were based on the costs at that time.

While an uplift for building inflation of 18.34% to Q3/2021 was included in the Fiscal Stimulus Business Case in February 2021, no one could have predicted the significant rise in construction costs as a consequence of both Brexit and the pandemic. Due to the time lapse and upward trend in building costs, the building is being surveyed again. This is scheduled to be completed by the middle of March.

Could you provide us with the details of the experts involved and how the structure of works has been planned?

CSP is the Project Manager and Quantity Surveyor for the refurbishments works. The design team, led by Morris Architects, is developing the planning and bye-law applications and the design brief for the delivery team.

The delay means that the £2.2 million required for the work will no longer be provided by the Fiscal Stimulus Fund and you have, as Assistant Minister, stated within the GoJ Press Release that the funds will be allocated from 'alternative funding sources'. Could you indicate from where the necessary funds will be allocated?

Fiscal stimulus funding is being withdrawn, as the project no longer meets the agreed timeline for the fund. Through discussions with Treasury and Infrastructure, Housing and Environment, alternative funding has been sourced through the end of year flexibility process for 2021.

We also note from recent media reports that you refer to the funding coming from 'underspends', if this is the case, could you inform the Panel as to the areas from which the underspends will be used? In addition, what reassurance have you been given by the Minister for Treasury and Resources that funds for this project will be prioritised?

Under the Public Finances Law, the Minister for Treasury and Resources has the power to transfer unspent amounts from departmental, project and reserve heads of expenditure, in one financial year to the Reserve in the following year. From there she can reallocate them. As part of this process, the Treasury Minister has decided to support the allocation of unspent amounts from 2021 to the Opera House project.

It is likely this term of Government will have ended before any funding has been allocated. What plans are in place to ensure the 'new' Minister for Treasury and Resources will allocate the necessary funding for this project.

Equivalent funding of £2.2 million has been allocated to the relevant Head of Expenditure as part of the end of year flexibility process. This funding will be provided to the Department for the express purpose of the refurbishment of the Opera House.

Could you provide further details as to how you, as Assistant Minister and officers in the Department for the Economy will be supporting the arts community whilst facilities remain unavailable such as the Opera House and Fort Regent.

During this period when the Opera House and Fort Regent are closed, I have asked officers to make it known to the arts community that we wish to help wherever possible as groups and individuals look for alternative venues.

We have already been approached by a number of organisations and have provided a range of assistance including helping find other venues, advising on the procurement of facilities and providing financial support.

I and my officers are pleased to be in continuous dialogue with the arts community and we are open to dialogue on all matters affecting Jersey's artists. I hope the above clarifies your lines of questioning and look forward to hearing from you on potential dates and times to visit the Opera House.

Yours sincerely,



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