

2025.07.08

**4.14 Deputy C.D. Curtis of the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning regarding plans for a new Highlands College campus (OQ.162/2025):**

Further to a statement made by the principal of Highlands College that the “College is not able to meet the demand of 14 to 16 year-olds from local schools” and that a new campus is essential, will the Minister outline any plans for a new campus for further and higher education?

**Deputy R.J. Ward (The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning):**

I thank the Deputy for her question. While there are no current approved plans for a new campus at Highland College, I fully recognise the importance of the college growing Jersey’s economy and growing pressure on its estate. The need for a long-term strategic solution is thoroughly acknowledged by myself.

**4.14.1 Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Does the Minister have plans to ensure full disabled access to the current building?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

There are a number of essential works. I have a page of A4 that I think the Scrutiny Panel has because it was the first 2 pages of the letter sent to the Scrutiny Panel, which was a really positive interaction with Jersey Property Holdings and the college over the work that is going on over the next coming years for essential maintenance, part of which will include disability access, I am sure. I do not have the details on that specifically but there is an enormous amount going on to do repairs at the college so that we can look ahead over a number of pieces of maintenance and development that is going on in the college in the coming year or so.

**4.14.2 Deputy J. Renouf:**

The Minister fully acknowledged the demand for a new campus but did not say anything about what would transpire in response to that demand. Can he state whether a new campus separate from Highlands College is under consideration or whether renovation or rebuilding of Highlands is the preferred solution?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I do thank the Deputy for his question. I think we do need to look wider than where the college is at the moment and whether or not a new site with purpose-built facilities may be a solution to the long-term needs of the college and our training needs. I would be open to that; absolutely open to that. I think perhaps we need to look wider and say it does not necessarily need to be on the campus where it is. If there is a site that is clear and available, then work can start while the college continues, which would make that easier in the long term as well. I would certainly be open to that.

**4.14.3 Deputy J. Renouf:**

The Government has a long-term infrastructure plan at the moment which has achieved much discussion. Is Highlands’ renovation or rebuild, on a new site or otherwise, part of that infrastructure renewal programme?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I thank the Deputy again. In terms of its maintenance and continuation, that is the first 2 pages of the letter that was not quoted in the press giving absolute detail on some of the works going on there. In terms of the long-term capital expenditure, Highlands College is not on that specific expenditure. However, if there is any way in which we can find a site, find the right place and get that moving, I think we need to have flexibility in that. An example is the repurposing of d’Hautree House for a brand-new La Passerelle School which was desperately needed. That was reprioritised and that is going to

happen and be ready in October. I think we need to be less tied down by those specifics and what can we get on with and what opportunities arise because we do not want to miss an opportunity when they arise for a new campus if we can possibly produce one.

**4.14.4 Deputy I. Gardiner:**

Would the Minister advise if there is a working group working on plans and options for the new campus?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

There are wide-ranging projects going on across government looking at all sorts of facilities, including Fort Regent, what opportunities that may raise, what opportunities there may be on other sites. What I would say to the Deputy is that if there is any opportunity for me to get a facility, a site to build a new college, I would certainly push for that, whether it is at the college site itself or another site becomes available and is suitable and would be successful in the long term. That is about as much as I can say on that at the moment.

**4.14.5 Deputy I. Gardiner:**

Would the Minister agree that to meet 14 to 16 education needs, needs to have a clarity how the education would be delivered so the officers can find opportunities to the way that education would be delivered? Would the Minister advise: does he have a working group within his department that is looking at what will be needed and how education will be delivered that we can put buildings to their policy direction?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Yes, this is slightly off the question but I would be pleased to answer it. That is exactly what is happening since day one of my tenure. We have been looking at how education will be delivered, what needs to change. Some examples of what is happening is the secondment of 2 headteachers into the department to see how schools and the department can work better to support each other, understand the needs of children in schools, including 14 to 16 education. I am about to finish the very final school where I go and consult with young people about post-16 education at Mont à l'Alabbé next week. We have spoken to quite a few children across our schools in terms of what their provision for post-16 education is. I think that should be the priority in terms of our structure ongoing. We are also looking at the provision of early years and nursery care. We are looking at how that feeds into primary schools and improving the ability of children to access primary schools early on and then how that progresses long term into qualifications. There is an enormous amount of work going on, both with the Curriculum Council and across the department in terms of the delivery of 14 to 16 education and beyond. Let me reassure the Deputy that is happening.

**4.14.6 Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

The panel received details of repairs to the current building but I do not recall any about work enabling disabled access. How will the Minister be ensuring full disabled access to the building and when?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

The works that are going on will go through Jersey Property Holdings and the college. I would have thought that, as those works go on, including the ability to get into the college, is part of that. If there are specific problems, then we can address those one at a time. I cannot give a specific time and what those individual problems are across a campus; that is really for Jersey Property Holdings. It is a very specific question for this time. We can look into it; I am sure we can give a response. I see the Minister for Infrastructure nodding at me, so we can certainly provide that.