

19.1 Connétable I. Gardiner of St. Helier of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the Victoria Marine Lake. (OQ.58/2026)

Following the recent incident of Victoria Marine Lake and the installation of additional safety measures, will the Minister outline the next steps for the Marine Lake and advise when it is expected to be restored to safe public use?

Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade (The Minister for Infrastructure):

It feels strangely appropriate to be answering the first question given my reputation for asking questions in the previous Assembly. [Laughter] So we had a lucky escape last month. We were exceptionally fortunate that the incident on 21st June resulted in just minor injuries and not something much more serious and we are of course thankful for that, but we cannot rely on luck again. As the Constable knows, we have therefore installed additional measures to try and improve public safety, but the key point is that it is still not safe to swim in the pool. We are now considering short-term measures that would make the site safer, while bearing in mind the structure's grade 4 listing. Once we have taken whatever short-term measures are most appropriate, we then need to consider the long-term future of the Marine pool alongside other investment and maintenance priorities. As things stand today, I do not know when, how or if the Marine Lake will be restored to safe public use. I am open to all options, but I would note that this is a 129 year-old structure that exists in a harsh environment that, for whatever reason, has not been properly maintained over the years and is therefore in a very poor state of repair.

19.1.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

It is all right for the Minister to say: "I do not know when it will be restored" and it is a harsh environment, but we are in the 21st century and I would like to check, if we do not know when it will be restored, would the Minister advise when does he expect to at least receive all assessments and to have plans to put in place and not restore? If it is several months or what the timeline is this Minister is working in.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Yes, that is a very reasonable question. The answer is that, in terms of the short-term measures that we might take, I would be expecting to decide those within a matter of weeks. They require consultation with Regulation, it is a listed structure, but those measures we should be able to take decisions on very quickly. In terms of the longer-term future, I think that is a question that I would want to discuss with the Constable, with other Deputies of the area and so on and with my ministerial colleagues. As I say, I think that decision needs to be taken in the context of our overall investment programme for infrastructure in the Island.

19.1.2 Deputy K.F. Morel of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

I was just wondering if the Minister would ensure that demolition is one of the options that is on the list of options. It does not mean demolition should take place but sometimes, with a 129-year-old structure, it just needs to be accepted that it is time for it to go. So would the Minister ensure that demolition is one of the potential options that should be looked at?

Deputy J. Renouf:

Yes, I think I said in my first answer that I would consider all options and clearly all options would include a removal of the structure. The Deputy will be aware that the structure is listed. Listing is a statement of significance. A listing gives guidance to society at large about what is considered significant. It is grade 4 listed which recognises the fact that it has been, in colloquial terms, "knocked about quite a bit" over the years. It is not the original structure, so that would indeed be an option. As I said earlier though, it would be considered in the light of all the other priorities that we have for infrastructure spending.

19.1.3 Connétable A. Howell of Trinity:

I just wondered if the Minister would consider removing the grade 4 listing.

Deputy J. Renouf:

I think that would be implicit if the decision is that we did not wish to fund a full restoration, the cost of which I think was previously - certainly by the Constable in a proposition that she brought or an amendment she brought to the budget - at £600,000 with an ongoing expenditure of £60,000 a year, which I think are reasonable estimates. Were we to decide that we did not wish to do that, then delisting would have to be a part of that process.

19.1.4 Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

The former Minister for Infrastructure, when discussing the amendment to the Budget around funding for maintenance of Victoria Marine Lake pool, said that in 2025 he had spent £65,000 on the structure because his first priority was safety. Obviously, that seems to have not worked. What was the analysis from the department of that £65,000 and what has deemed it unsafe now?

Deputy J. Renouf:

Yes, I think it is very telling in fact that indeed my predecessor did authorise expenditure of £65,000 over the winter to repair the pool. I think it was finished around January-time and, within 3 months, the wall had failed again, which is indicative of the challenges that we face with that structure. It failed by the undertow, so the water, under hydraulic pressure of being held in, found a way underneath the wall in several places. That created whirlpooling which had the risk of sucking people down and pinning them against the wall. Therefore, the decision was taken to open the sluice gates which would provide a faster means for the water to get out. However, it was recognised that that did not remove the risk and, indeed, what happened was somebody was indeed sucked down through the sluice gates. They did at least make it through alive but, as I say, we had a very lucky escape and, therefore, the short-term options we are considering have to include an option that would remove that danger.

[15:00]

19.1.5 Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier Central:

The listing of the pool has been mentioned a number of times, and I am just wondering if the Minister thinks that this is the biggest hurdle to making the pool safe and/or investing in it?

Deputy J. Renouf:

No, I do not think the listing is a barrier to making it safe. A listing imposes responsibilities on us when we do things to the structure. We have to consult about them and have due regard to its listed status, and then that would mean that we would be dealing with regulation to make sure that they were happy with whatever steps we were taking. I do not regard that as a barrier. I think that is an appropriate thing to do when we identify an important historic structure and that we have a series of checks and balances before we undertake work. I think it represents a slightly bigger barrier to removal because it is a listed structure, but as I have already outlined, I do not think that that is a complete barrier to removal and I am prepared to consider that as an option.

19.1.6 Deputy L.V. Feltham of St. Helier Central:

Given that, in the answer to my Written Question, the Minister confirmed that the incident took place on 21st June but was not notified to the department until 1st July, and then it took almost a further week for the incident to be reported publicly, can the Minister give us more confidence as an Assembly that action will be taken sooner both in terms of notifying departments of such serious incidents that need their attention, but also notifying members of the public where they should avoid areas of what is significant risk?

Deputy J. Renouf:

Well, the answer is of course we will act in as rapid a fashion as we can. I have a slight issue with the timeline the Deputy has outlined. I have not got my calendar in front of me, but I remember I was appointed on the Tuesday 2 weeks ago and, on the Wednesday, I was informed later in the day of this incident and, on the Friday, we made public announcements about it. In the intervening period, I had requested officers to find out more information about the nature of the incident and to explore what options were available and

that time was used to, for example, do a full assessment of what warning signs were in place and what immediate steps could be taken to remediate the situation. So that took about 48 hours and we then made the announcements that we did. So I think that was a fairly timely action, and it did not stop there. Over the weekend we explored the options around putting the line of buoys in, and that was done on the Monday morning.

19.1.7 Deputy L.V. Feltham:

Because I do have the dates and the Written Question in front of me, so would the Minister undertake to assess the reason why there was a delay in the department being notified about the incident because that of course will have caused a delay in him being able to take the processes that he then did undertake very quickly?

Deputy J. Renouf:

Yes, I think it is worth just recapping a little bit what did happen. The incident happened on the 21st. However, there was no formal notification to any authority in Jersey at that time. There was a visiting school party, I understand, and we were notified sometime after the event by, I understand, informal means. I was told it was to the Parish Hall - although the Constable tells me she had no knowledge of that and it was me who told her about that event - but that is how the information came to us. I think it came because parents had probably complained about what had happened and wanted to know what Jersey was doing about it. That is my supposition, but it is supposition. So it took a while for the information to get back to Jersey and, as soon as I was made aware, I acted.

19.1.8 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

The Minister may be aware that chapter 6 of the Planning and Building (Jersey) Law 2002 talks about land condition orders; Article 84 talks about the requirement to repair or remove ruinous and dilapidated buildings. I am not sure if that applies in this case but certainly Article 86 talking about requiring proper maintenance does give the Minister for Planning and Regulation now the authority to issue a notice in that case. Does the Minister for D.f.I. (Department for Infrastructure) believe that it would be helpful for the newly elected Minister for Planning and Regulation to issue such a notice to facilitate the work that he needs to do and give a steer on what the Minister for Planning and Regulation thinks should be done with that site?

Deputy J. Renouf:

I think the Deputy raises a good question and I will be very happy to consult with my newly elected colleague, but I would note that throughout the time that we have been dealing with this structure - certainly the timeline I have goes back as far as about 2014 or 2012, I think - it has been dealt with by the Department for Infrastructure as a question of maintenance of an asset rather than as a dilapidated structure. So I think the precedent is that it has been dealt with as you would with a building that needs maintenance rather than as a dilapidated or ruinous structure.

19.1.9 Deputy M. Tadier:

With that mind, given the fact that it does have a listing, albeit a grade 4 listing, does the Minister think that it is important that Government leads by example? In the absence of any desire, if it transpires that that Government does not want to remove the listing, it leads by example and maintains its listed structures so that they can be enjoyed and certainly not pose any health risk to the public who would want to use them.

Deputy J. Renouf:

I think I have already spoken at some length about my attitude to the listing. Listing is an index of importance and it tells us that that structure has considerable historical and cultural significance. It does not say that it must be maintained at whatever cost for all time, and we are entitled to take a rational view about where we wish to put our resources. I note that the previous Assembly voted against an amendment to the Budget that would have allocated what I think is a reasonable estimate of what the funds would be. So I absolutely believe that listing is important and that the Government should take its listing responsibilities very seriously, but it also has overall responsibilities to consider the best allocation of resources.

19.1.10 Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

The Minister said that review of the work needed must be taken in the context of the wider investment programme. Will he explain where the work on the Marine Lake falls priority-wise within the wider investment demands that are placed on his portfolio?

Deputy J. Renouf:

Well it is an important asset for the Island but it is a very old structure and a very dilapidated structure. I would point out that the department is carrying a backlog of maintenance on the property estate of a considerable size. Therefore, decisions about where the greatest priority lie have to be taken in the context of that overall estate and where operationally we most need that money spent. What I am not going to do is say that this rockets to the top of the priority list; it does not.

19.1.11 The Connétable of St. Helier:

The £600,000 was raised several times but I never managed to get a clear answer from the Government how much it will cost. My question to the new Minister for Infrastructure, what repair options is the Minister considering for Victoria Marine Lake and would he commit to publish or to share evidence-based estimated cost for each option so we would know the number and what is possible?

Deputy J. Renouf:

The second bit is easy; yes, I will commit to consult and discuss and publish whatever information I am able to achieve. I should say in terms of the short-term options that I am considering, which I think are very important to bear in mind because we do have a significant safety risk here, the 2 options that are most immediately likely to be considered are pouring a lot of concrete to plug the existing holes that we have. The advantage of that is at least in the short term it brings the pool back into use. The disadvantage is that it could fail again at any moment, and we may not know that it has failed because of the method in which the water goes underneath; therefore, there would be ongoing continuous maintenance costs. The other option is to make a breach in the wall, which would mean that the water flowed out unimpeded as soon as the tide started to go out. The disadvantage would be that it would no longer be a pool. The advantage would be that we would have removed the safety hazard and we would have safeguarded the remaining bits of the wall because they would not be subject to the same hydraulic pressure that is currently undermining the structure. Those 2 options need to be costed up and they need to be discussed with Regulation to see how they view them in the light of the listing status. Those are the 2 immediate options that are under consideration in the department. The longer-term options, as I said, would come forward more in due course.

The Bailiff:

I am now going to pause to give the results of the 2 outstanding elections in relation to the associate member of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly. The result is: the Connétable of St. Martin, 22 votes; Deputy Coles, 12 votes; Deputy Raimondo, 11 votes. Accordingly, the Connétable of St. Martin is elected an associate member of the [Approbation] British-Irish Parliamentary Association.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can I just check the voting? Does it not go to a second round of the first result? I might be wrong.

The Bailiff:

Not in relation to that, no. There is one abstention as well. Now in relation to the Bailiff's Consultative Panel: the Connétable of St. Helier received 35 votes; Deputy Tadier received 31 votes; Deputy Alex Curtis and Deputy Stephenson both received 30 votes; Deputy Morel received 27 votes; Deputy Doublet received 20 votes; and Deputy Porée who was not standing received one vote so [Laughter] congratulations to her. The Connétable of St. Helier, Deputies Tadier, Alex Curtis, Stephenson and Morel are appointed members of the Bailiff's Consultative Panel. [Approbation]