

3.2 Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the accessibility of the States Chamber (OQ.37/2025):

Following reports written in 2018 and 2022 to assess the accessibility of the States Chamber and environs, will the Minister advise how he is ensuring that the necessary work is being carried out in the States building to ensure compliance with disability legislation and what priority is being given to this work?

Connétable A.N. Jehan of St. John (The Minister for Infrastructure):

I thank the Deputy for her question. It is an important topic which we are taking forward. This building, which houses the Island's Parliament, should be as accessible as possible, but of course we work in an old and historic building with practical challenges. Officers from Property Holdings most recently met with the Diversity Forum on 13th February and we continue to work with them to determine which of the recommendations made in those reports fall to the tenants and which are an obligation of the landlord. We will also be in discussions with Planning to understand the recommendations made; what is and is not achievable due to planning restrictions associated with the premise. We have given a 4-week timetable to get feedback on that.

3.2.1 Deputy H.M. Miles:

I thank the Minister for his question. I was certainly part of the Diversity Forum when his officers came in to talk to us. We have an election coming up again in 2026 and we are trying to make this Assembly as diverse as possible. How will the Minister tackle the current accessibility issues of this Chamber and what will he do before 2026 to remove the barrier for some potential candidates from standing for election?

The Connétable of St. John:

I do not believe anybody should be barred from standing for election because of physical ability. There is a larger piece of work to develop a matrix across all of our properties, not only this building, and clearly funding is a challenge for us. It is an objective for the team in 2025 to come up with a plan where we can find ways to make this building and other buildings in our responsibility more accessible.

3.2.2 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour:

Does the Minister believe that it is possible to make this present building completely accessible and compliant?

The Connétable of St. John:

I am not an engineer. I believe it is possible to get people to this part of the building, to the floor of the Assembly. I think it would be a struggle to get people to the gallery.

3.2.3 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Does the Minister believe that this building is still fit for purpose?

The Connétable of St. John:

We are meeting here today, so I believe it must be fit for purpose. Is it ideal? No, it is not. Would a new building be appreciated? Yes, it would. But where is the money coming from and where is it on our priorities?

3.2.4 Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North:

Following the previous answer from the Minister that mentioned that he would like to see this building and other buildings in the Government ownership being fully accessible, would the Minister advise if he does have a framework or table that all recommendations from reports from 2018 into 2021 are included and we have prioritisation over the years bringing the building to comply with disability requirements?

The Connétable of St. John:

I think I tried to touch on that earlier, that there is a larger piece of work to develop a priority matrix across the whole estate. We only have a small amount of funding each year within Property Holdings to undertake D.D.A. (Disability Discrimination Act) works, and that is the objective within the team to do the matrix this year and come up with a priority list.

3.2.5 Deputy I. Gardiner:

Would the Minister advise if he had requested funding for disability work to make sure that buildings are complied with disability in 2024?

The Connétable of St. John:

I must confess, I did not ask for extra funding last year in the Budget process.

3.2.6 Deputy H.M. Miles:

In the interim, what discussions take place with the States Greffe in the Jersey Property Holdings capacity as landlord to understand and mitigate the risks associated with this building?

The Connétable of St. John:

I am not aware of the detail but I will find out and I will get back to the Deputy and Members.