Training Ship Jersey | Unit 447

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02/11/2026

Response to the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

I would like to thank the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel for the opportunity to contribute to its review of the Proposed Budget 2027–2030, particularly in relation to the provision of a permanent headquarters for TS Jersey. I have personally engaged with the Scrutiny Panel on an annual basis since 2019, providing written responses and welcoming representatives to our Unit to gain a first-hand understanding of our activities, achievements, operational challenges and aspirations for the future. I have always valued this engagement and the Panel's continued interest in the opportunities we provide for young people in Jersey. The current proposals represent a particularly significant milestone in the Unit's history. I therefore welcome the opportunity to offer our perspective on the proposed investment, its suitability for our long-term operational needs and, most importantly, the opportunities it presents to further develop our educational, vocational and youth development provision for future generations.

1. Do you believe the proposed project fulfils the intentions and requirements for a permanent Sea Cadets Headquarters?
Based on the proposals presented to date, I believe that the proposed facility has the potential to meet the operational requirements of TS Jersey and provide a suitable permanent headquarters for the Sea Cadets.

This assessment is, however, dependent upon the final designs incorporating the proposed addition of a main deck, alongside the other refurbishment, adaptation and improvement works discussed during the planning process.

The inclusion of a main deck is particularly important, as it would provide the principal space for ceremonial divisions, parade training, instruction and larger group activities, all of which are fundamental to the operation and identity of a Royal Navy Sea Cadet unit.

Subject to these elements being incorporated into the final design and delivered as proposed, I would consider the facility capable of providing a fit-for-purpose headquarters that supports both our current training programme and our longer-term operational requirements.

It is important, however, that the final assessment of suitability is based upon the completed design and agreed scope of works, rather than the suitability of the existing building in its present condition.

2. Are you satisfied that the identified site will meet your long-term operational needs?
Based on the proposals presented to date, I am broadly satisfied that the identified site has the potential to meet the long-term operational requirements of TS Jersey, provided that the proposed adaptations and improvements are delivered as envisaged.
Our operational requirements extend beyond the provision of classrooms and administrative accommodation. As a Royal Navy Sea Cadet unit, we deliver a diverse programme encompassing maritime training, seamanship, engineering, STEM, leadership development, ceremonial activities and practical vocational qualifications. The headquarters must therefore provide sufficient flexibility

to accommodate multiple training activities simultaneously, alongside appropriate storage, administrative facilities and safeguarding arrangements.

The proposed addition of a main deck is particularly important in this regard, providing a central space for divisions, ceremonial activities, collective training and larger gatherings.

The long-term suitability of the site must also be considered in the context of the Unit's continued development. Having demonstrated significant growth in participation and the breadth of training delivered over recent years, it is important that the new headquarters does not simply accommodate our immediate requirements but provides sufficient flexibility to adapt to changing training demands and future opportunities.

Subject to the final design providing the necessary training spaces, supporting facilities and operational flexibility, I believe the site offers a credible long-term solution.

A further consideration is the security of tenure and the arrangements for the ongoing maintenance and management of the premises. Given the considerable public investment involved, it is essential that the Sea Cadets benefit from a genuinely permanent and sustainable headquarters, with arrangements that provide long-term operational certainty.

3. Have you been appropriately involved in the design and planning process for the proposed facility?

TS Jersey recognises and appreciates the work undertaken by the Government of Jersey in progressing the proposals for a permanent headquarters.

We have welcomed the opportunity to contribute to discussions concerning the operational requirements of the Unit and the adaptations necessary to make the proposed premises suitable for Sea Cadet activities.

As the principal end user of the facility, it is particularly important that our operational experience and understanding of the training environment continue to inform the design process. The requirements of a Royal Navy Sea Cadet headquarters extend beyond conventional educational accommodation and include specialist training spaces, appropriate storage, safeguarding considerations, ceremonial facilities and the flexibility to deliver several activities simultaneously.

The proposed addition of a main deck is an example of the importance of incorporating the Unit's operational requirements into the design.

While we are encouraged by the proposals developed thus far, our assessment of the final design will depend upon the extent to which the agreed requirements are reflected in the detailed plans and subsequent delivery.

We would therefore welcome continued engagement throughout the remaining design, planning and construction phases, including the opportunity to review and comment upon the final specifications before they are formally approved.

Our priority is to ensure that the completed facility is not only suitable for occupation but genuinely supports the effective and sustainable delivery of Sea Cadet training for many years to come.

4. To what extent will the new headquarters improve the delivery of training, education and youth development activities?

The provision of a permanent headquarters represents a significant milestone in the history of TS Jersey. The Unit has been actively seeking a permanent home since the 1960s, and this project offers an opportunity, after more than six decades, to establish lasting roots within the Island and create a sustainable foundation for future generations of young people.
The benefits of a permanent headquarters extend considerably beyond the provision of improved accommodation. It presents an opportunity to further develop TS Jersey as a centre for youth development, practical education and vocational training, building upon our established maritime heritage while expanding the breadth of opportunities available to young people.

Our current programme already encompasses maritime training, seamanship, engineering, STEM, first aid, leadership development, adventure training and nationally recognised qualifications. The proposed facility, particularly the addition of a main deck and dedicated training areas, would provide greater flexibility to deliver these activities simultaneously, improve the efficiency of our training programme and support the continued development of specialist training capabilities.
Of particular importance is the opportunity to strengthen the links between the training and qualifications we deliver and potential pathways into further education, employment, the uniformed services and local industry. Through greater collaboration with employers, professional organisations and public services, we envisage developing opportunities that expose young people to practical skills, emerging technologies and vocational disciplines that are directly relevant to Jersey's future workforce.

This could include further development of our engineering, maritime, unmanned aerial systems and STEM programmes, alongside opportunities for engagement with the Armed Forces, emergency services and other uniformed organisations. In doing so, we would seek to bridge the gap between youth development, vocational education and future career opportunities.

Equally important are the wider personal development benefits. Sea Cadets provides a structured environment in which young people develop confidence, resilience, teamwork, leadership, self-discipline and a sense of personal responsibility. A permanent, well-equipped headquarters would allow us to build upon these outcomes while creating a stronger sense of belonging, identity and continuity for both cadets and adult volunteers.

For a volunteer-led organisation, the stability afforded by permanent accommodation would also improve our ability to plan strategically, invest in equipment and facilities, develop our instructional workforce and establish longer-term partnerships with educational institutions and industry.

Ultimately, this project should be viewed not simply as the provision of a new building, but as an investment in the future of Jersey's young people. After more than 60 years of seeking a permanent headquarters, we have an opportunity to create a lasting educational and community asset that allows TS Jersey to consolidate its existing achievements, expand its vocational and developmental offer, and provide meaningful opportunities for generations to come.

5. The current proposal is estimated at £2.8 million, compared with a previous allocation of £5 million. Does the Sea Cadets organisation consider the revised proposal provides good value for money?
From the perspective of TS Jersey, the assessment of value for money should consider not only the initial capital expenditure, but also the suitability, longevity and operational benefits of the completed facility.

The reduction in the proposed expenditure from £5 million to approximately £2.8 million is substantial. However, the identification of an existing building that can be adapted to meet our operational requirements presents an opportunity to achieve the intended outcome at a considerably lower capital cost than originally anticipated.

Based on the proposals presented to date, and subject to the inclusion of the main deck and the completion of the associated refurbishment and adaptation works, we believe the revised project has the potential to deliver the essential facilities required for a permanent Royal Navy Sea Cadet headquarters without compromising the principal objectives of the original commitment.

It is important to recognise that TS Jersey has been seeking a permanent headquarters since the 1960s. The value of this investment should therefore be considered over several decades, rather than solely against the immediate construction budget. A permanent facility would provide operational stability, enable longer-term planning and investment, and support the continued development of training, education and vocational opportunities for young people across the Island.

We also see considerable potential to maximise the wider community benefit of the investment through partnerships with educational establishments, uniformed services and local industry. Such collaboration could extend the educational and vocational opportunities available to young people, ensuring that the facility delivers benefits well beyond its primary function as a Sea Cadet headquarters.

Nevertheless, the reduction in capital expenditure must not result in essential elements of the facility being omitted or deferred in a manner that compromises its operational effectiveness or creates additional financial liabilities for the Unit. Equally, consideration should be given to the ongoing maintenance, running costs and long-term sustainability of the premises.

Provided that the agreed operational requirements are delivered within the revised budget, and that the building is maintained as a sustainable long-term facility, we consider the proposal capable of representing good value for money for both the Government of Jersey and the wider community.

The ultimate measure of success will be whether the investment delivers a genuinely permanent, fit-for-purpose headquarters that enables TS Jersey to provide high-quality training and youth development opportunities for generations to come.

6. Has the reduction in anticipated expenditure resulted in any significant changes to the project's scope or expected benefits?

The reduction in anticipated expenditure appears to reflect a change in the approach to delivering a permanent headquarters, rather than necessarily a reduction in the operational capabilities or benefits that the project is intended to provide.

The identification of an existing building suitable for adaptation offers a different solution to the original proposals, with the potential to achieve the same fundamental objectives at a substantially lower capital cost.

From TS Jersey's perspective, our core operational requirements remain unchanged. We require a permanent, safe and appropriately equipped facility capable of supporting our existing training programme, accommodating multiple activities simultaneously and providing sufficient flexibility for future development.

Based on the proposals presented to date, including the proposed addition of a main deck and the associated refurbishment and adaptation works, we have not identified any fundamental reduction in the intended operational benefits. However, this assessment remains dependent upon the final design, specification and scope of works reflecting the facilities and adaptations discussed during the planning process.

It is important to distinguish between changes to the method of delivering the project and changes that might compromise its intended outcomes. We would not necessarily regard a reduction in construction expenditure as a reduction in project scope, provided that the completed facility delivers the agreed operational requirements.

Our ambition for the new headquarters remains consistent with the original commitment: to establish a permanent base that supports high-quality maritime education, vocational training, leadership development and wider youth opportunities. In particular, we wish to ensure that the facility provides the flexibility to develop partnerships with educational establishments, uniformed services and local industry.

While we recognise the importance of responsible public expenditure, we would be concerned if essential elements were omitted from the final scheme or deferred to a later stage without identified funding. Such an approach could compromise operational effectiveness or transfer additional financial responsibilities to the Unit.

We therefore consider it important that the final approved specification clearly identifies the facilities and works to be delivered, together with any elements that may have been amended or excluded from earlier proposals.

Subject to the agreed design and operational requirements being delivered in full, we do not currently anticipate that the revised financial provision will materially diminish the benefits expected from the project.

Our overriding priority is that the completed headquarters provides a genuinely permanent and sustainable facility, capable of meeting both the current and future needs of TS Jersey and the young people we serve.

7. What impact do you expect the new headquarters to have on participation, recruitment and retention of young people?

We anticipate that the provision of a permanent, purpose-adapted headquarters will have a significant positive impact on participation, recruitment and retention, while enabling TS Jersey to broaden the opportunities available to young people across the Island.

Over recent years, TS Jersey has demonstrated its ability to attract and retain young people through a diverse and progressive programme of activities. Our growth has been accompanied by the expansion of our training capabilities, the development of specialist instructional teams and an increasing emphasis on recognised qualifications and practical skills.

However, our capacity to expand participation is inevitably influenced by the facilities available to us. This is particularly evident within our Junior Sea Cadet section, where demand has exceeded available places and we have maintained a waiting list.

A permanent headquarters would provide an opportunity to address some of these constraints through improved training accommodation, more effective scheduling and the ability to deliver several activities simultaneously. This would support a more structured approach to recruitment and potentially allow us to accommodate greater numbers of young people without compromising the quality of training or the standards of supervision and safeguarding.

We also anticipate benefits for retention. Young people are more likely to remain engaged when they can access a varied, progressive and rewarding training programme that develops alongside their interests and abilities. The new headquarters would provide a stronger foundation for expanding our existing activities, introducing new vocational and technical training opportunities, and creating clearer pathways towards qualifications, leadership responsibilities and future careers.

Of particular importance is our ambition to strengthen relationships with schools, further education providers, uniformed services and local industry. By connecting our youth development programme with practical vocational training and opportunities for career exploration, we believe we can increase the relevance and appeal of Sea Cadets to a broader range of young people.

The establishment of a permanent headquarters would also strengthen the Unit's identity and visibility within the community. Having sought a permanent home since the 1960s, the opportunity to establish lasting roots would provide a greater sense of stability, belonging and pride for cadets, their families and our adult volunteers.

Retention is equally dependent upon the commitment and availability of our volunteer instructors. A well-equipped and appropriately designed headquarters would improve the environment in which they operate, reduce the administrative and logistical demands associated with delivering training, and support the recruitment, development and retention of additional adult volunteers. This, in turn, would help increase our capacity to deliver activities and accommodate more cadets.

While the precise increase in participation cannot be quantified until the final facilities, staffing and training capacity are confirmed, we believe the project has the potential to deliver sustained growth in both the number of young people participating and the range of opportunities available to them.

Ultimately, our aspiration is not simply to increase cadet numbers, but to increase the opportunities, qualifications and positive outcomes available to every young person who joins us. A permanent headquarters would provide the foundation to achieve this, enabling TS Jersey to build upon more than a century of service to the Island and continue developing as a valuable contributor to youth education, personal development and future workforce skills.

Kind Regards

David

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