

ST. HELENA
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

THE SPEAKER

Mr Eric William Benjamin

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

The Honourable Chief Secretary	-	Mr Owen O'Sullivan
The Honourable Financial Secretary	-	Mr Colin Owen
The Honourable Acting Attorney General	-	Mrs Morag Stevenson

ELECTED MEMBERS

The Honourable Leslie Paul Baldwin
The Honourable Nigel Dollery
The Honourable Wilson Charles Duncan
The Honourable Gavin George Ellick
The Honourable Cyril Robert George
The Honourable Anthony Arthur Green
The Honourable Lawson Arthur Henry
The Honourable Brian William Isaac
The Honourable Bernice Alicia Olsson
The Honourable Ian Sebastian Rummery
The Honourable Christine Lilian Scipio O'Dean
The Honourable Derek Franklin Thomas

CLERK OF COUNCILS

Ms Gina Benjamin

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE SECOND SITTING
OF THE FIRST MEETING OF LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

Tuesday, 15th October, 2013

The Council met at 10.00 am
in the Court House, Jamestown

(The Speaker in the Chair)

ORDER OF THE DAY

1. FORMAL ENTRY OF THE PRESIDENT

2. PRAYERS

3. ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT

Please be seated. Good morning, Honourable Members, there's not much of an address I want to do this morning, just welcome you back to the second sitting of the first meeting of the Legislative Council. Just one or two little announcements which I omitted at the first sitting, that is to explain the absence of the substantive Attorney General, he is away on sick leave at the present time and Honourable Morag Stevenson is here replacing him for this time. There's one other announcement too, we have the Honourable Cyril George who has returned from his overseas conference, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Johannesburg, which members are now aware, he has reported to Council exactly of his activities in Johannesburg and he has found that very fruitful, very beneficial to himself and to us. There's also one other announcement to make and that is the Joint Ministerial Conference which will be attended this year from 7th November to 11th the Councillor will be away, by the Honourable Lawson Henry and we wish you well with the Conference as you go to the Ministerial Conference.

The Hon. Lawson Henry –
Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

So on to the business of today. It seems that we have two Motions and, of course, we have the Adjournment Debate. Honourable Members, remember the conditions of debates, what you can and what you can't do. Now, so that there is no confusion, when we last sat here, there was a new Motion put on the table. It started off by being an amendment to the earlier Motion, the previous Motion, it turned out that the Motion was so worded so that it went beyond the bounds of an amendment and became almost a new Motion as such. Because we didn't withdraw the first Motion, the previous Motion on the table, that Motion still stands, so I've allowed this Motion to be handled as if it was an amendment to the original Motion. I think that's all I need to say. When the time comes or the Motion is to be debated, then you will proceed. You will understand, of course, that if I do that, those who have already spoken to the original Motion may not speak again to that same Motion, so we can take it from there. Okay, Clerk of Councils?

4. MOTIONS

Motion No. 1 – The Honourable Brian Isaac

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Mr Speaker, I thank you for your opening remarks and as we will recall from yesterday afternoon I think we were making harsh decisions on a very short time, it was a sort of rushed process, in my opinion, and after going home last night and giving some thought to the proceedings of the day, I would ask if the amended Motion could be withdrawn from the floor and that the original Motion stands as presented. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

That's a formal notice to withdraw?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

The formal notice is to withdraw the amended Motion, but I would wish for the original Motion to remain as on the Order Paper.

The Speaker –

Do you have a seconder for the withdrawal of the Motion?

The Hon. Nigel Dollery –

Mr Speaker, I will second that Motion.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much indeed and Members will allow that Motion to be withdrawn.

Question on withdrawal of amended Motion, put and agreed to.

The Speaker –

The Motion is withdrawn; I've been treating it as an amendment, so it goes back to the original. The original is on the floor. I will read the original Motion. The original Motion, standing in the name of the Honourable Brian Isaac, that this Council calls upon the Government to take immediate steps to create a level playing field, both financially and otherwise for all local media organisations. Anyone who has not spoken to the Motion before may now speak to the Motion; it's open for debate. Yes, Councillor Dollery?

The Hon. Nigel Dollery –

Mr Speaker, no-one can argue that it is reasonable that all media are treated the same. How that is done is a matter for our budgeting system to work out, but it is reasonable that they're treated the same. That might mean some lose money and others will gain money to bring them into balance and it doesn't necessarily have to be done like that. Maybe clever management of things like fees for advertising could be used to help bring this about. I could not support the ongoing system where there does seem to be a wide disparity in the treatment of the two forms of media we have, the two groups of media we have on this island. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there any other Honourable Member wish to speak? Honourable Bernice Olsson?

The Hon. Bernice Olsson –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I declare my interest.....

The Speaker –

Can I ask what is your interest, please?

The Hon. Bernice Olsson –

I am a member of the Saint FM Community Radio.

The Speaker –

You may speak.

The Hon. Bernice Olsson –

Mr Speaker, the St Helena we are working with substantial money paid as media subsidies to SAMS. The money would be much better used in other areas of Government where funding is floundering. Under all circumstances, the current media funding principles, which were brought forward under Governor Gurr administration and later protected by Governor Capes and his administrators and as far away from fair and level you can get. It goes against the grain of private sector development and local investment, which are some of the pillars of our future. The Government footprint should be smaller, not bigger. SHG should immediately get away from interfering in media through subsidies and instead pay for the services media can offer in a fair and transparent manner. The Government has previously done the opposite to their own policies. This has to stop. How much money has been paid to SAMS? I do not know, but I do know that the disclosure from the Financial Secretary last week suggesting that the funding so far has been £277,000 and a further £115,000 committed was not entirely correct. SAMS obviously had recurrent funding prior to October 2012, which the Financial Secretary did not disclose and still the funding with the new media place at the Gardens will yet again come under undisclosed sources. Mr Speaker, we want free and independent media on the island, which can be achieved without great burden on the taxpayer. Some of what I am saying is to stop all media subsidies immediately. Some of the debate yesterday afternoon made me flabbergasted. In Councillor Thomas's Motion about the building sector and immigration, the intention was to create a level playing field between Government and private sector. This Motion was carried, but only a few minutes later, some of the Members argued against a level playing field between Government funding activities and private sector with the media; it is stunning. There is no difference if we are talking about the building

sector, media or any other commercial activity. It is our Government's responsibility to create a level playing field and to stop distorting the market, in this case, surely, for political reasons. Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there any other person wishing to speak to the Motion? The Honourable Mover? Sorry, okay, I see a move to indicate, have you spoken before, Sir?

The Hon. Wilson Duncan –

No, I haven't, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Honourable Wilson Duncan?

The Hon. Wilson Duncan –

Mr Speaker, I'm in favour of supporting this Motion as I firmly believe that there is not a level playing field for all local media organisations and I say this as St Helena Government has created this situation by financially supporting one particular media organisation, namely, South Atlantic Media Services, SAMS, by subsidising it with an enormous amount of money to the tune of some £270,000 since its inception with more in the asking. This I find very difficult to accept as it appears to me that St Helena Government, in their infinite wisdom, can put more importance on funding and subsidising a media organisation more than the farming and fishing industry, who provide our much needed food. With regards to a level playing field for media organisations, there are two possible ways, in my opinion, how this could be achieved. (1) By funding both media organisations equally by way of subsidy, or, (2) withdraw funding for St Helena Media Services, SAMS, and let both media organisations generate income through advertising and fundraising etc and by Government paying for the advertising in both media organisations. Mr Speaker, I move to support this Motion.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Member wish to speak? The Honourable Mover, your turn to wind up on this?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Mr Speaker, I thank all the Members who have spoken and expressed their views in connection with this Motion. I think it's been helpful, because there have been lots of concerns raised by the public on this particular topic, it was brought to this House today so see where we can progress in assisting media being independent on the island and I would thank all the Members for what has been said. Whilst I'm on my feet, Mr Speaker, I would just like to give a little background on the Community Radio, and the reason why I'm giving a little background on the Community Radio, as it is a community spirit, it's the community spirit that has got the radio.....

The Speaker –

Yes, there is just a point of order here, Honourable Member, you are not allowed to embark on any new information that you haven't given before. When you wind up, you wind up on what has been said by the other members of the Council and yourself. Introducing any new information is now out of order.

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Okay, thank you, Mr Speaker, but, in winding up, I would just like to say that I hope that Members will consider their vote on this, it's not asking for funding, it was a bit of a kaffuffle yesterday afternoon with the amended Motion, it's not asking for funding, it's asking for a level playing field, especially in respect of the advertisements and how that is carried out in sharing between both stations. On that note, I would like to thank this House.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Motion is as such, that this Council calls upon the Government to take immediate steps to create a level playing field, both financially and otherwise, for all local media organisations.

Question on Motion, put and agreed to.

The Motion is carried.

The Speaker –

Clerk?

Motion No. 2 – The Honourable Leslie Baldwin.

The Hon. Leslie Baldwin –

Mr Speaker, I beg to move that this House calls upon the Government to consider lobbying HMG to change the rules regarding receipt of National Lottery Funding by Overseas Territories.

The Speaker –

Is there a seconder?

The Hon. Nigel Dollery –

Mr Speaker, I beg to second this Motion, but must declare an interest as Treasurer of the Heritage Society and a member of the Executive Committee of the Heritage Society. If this Motion's successful, I am quite sure we would apply for funds from it.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Mover?

The Hon. Leslie Baldwin –

Mr Speaker, I have been informed that direct National Lottery funding is unavailable to St Helena. However, applications can be made to UK organisations that receive lottery funding for assistance, in, for example, maintenance of built heritage. Unfortunately, the criteria for this funding states that all UK based applications will be given precedence over any from the Overseas Territories. This criteria seems to totally disregard the fact that St Helena's built heritage is, in fact, Britain's heritage as well. I would like for this Government to lobby Her Majesty's Government to recognise the simple fact that our heritage is, indeed, their heritage and allow applications for this type of funding to be done on a meritocracy basis, repairing the most valuable or critical pieces of history or heritage no matter where they are within the realms of the UK. I have been informed most recently that much work has been done by the Overseas Territories in combination and St Helena was represented by Kedell Worboys in those discussions, but they are not confident of change. I think primarily the reasons for such low prioritisation is because we do not contribute or play in the Lottery itself. Much is said

of machinery and the maintenance necessary to do so. However, it would appear possible to play by using the direct debit system. If it were to open the door to this vital funding, I would personally welcome it. Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Honourable Member. The Motion is that this House calls upon the Government to consider lobbying HMG to change the rules regarding receipt of National Lottery Funding by Overseas Territories. The Motion is now open to debate. Any member who may wish to speak may speak now. Honourable Anthony Green?

The Hon. Anthony Green –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would like to say that anything that opens doors for additional funding, particularly for our heritage, I would fully support. What I don't know is to what extent this has been previously explored and what are the possible pitfalls, but in principle, I fully support the idea of lobbying Her Majesty's Government to look for any ways, and particularly through the National Lottery of being able to support our heritage. Thank you, Sir.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Sir. Honourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the Motion, I think it's been well presented and again, as my Colleague said, whatever options are available, maybe they're not as clear at the moment and I'm sure that this Motion is presented to Her Majesty's Government will clear that?....? so we hope that the outcomes would be positive. I support the Motion. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Member wish to speak? Honourable Ian Rummery?

The Hon. Ian Rummery –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I wish to rise in support of this Motion. Clearly any other avenues of funding that we can access would be beneficial to the island. I know recently when I was looking for alternative sources of funding for health-related initiative, such health-related initiatives were funded by the Lottery funding, which I think they call Big Lottery funding in the UK, and as my Honourable Member says, particularly in heritage, the heritage of this island helped to create the British Empire and helped create the Britain that we have today so while, from what I understand, again, probably I'm not that confident of success, I still think it's an avenue worth pursuing and I think we certainly would seek clarity on what has happened so far and if there are any ways forward. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Member wish to speak to the Motion? Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I rise too in support of the Motion and without trying to repeat what everybody else has said, I support the Motion. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Wilson Duncan?

The Hon. Wilson Duncan –

I rise in support of the Motion in its entirety.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Member wish to speak? Then would the Honourable Mover like to wind up the Motion?

The Hon. Leslie Baldwin –

Mr Speaker, I'd like to thank everybody who did rise in support of the Motion and I hope we'll have a successful outcome. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much.

Question on Motion, put and agreed to.

The Motion is carried.

The Speaker –

Clerk?

5.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Hon. Chief Secretary –

The Speaker –

Just before you speak, if you don't mind, I just want to remind Members on the Adjournment Debate, once the debate has been lodged, you have ten minutes only in which to speak by each person, okay, just ten minutes for your debate. That's by convention. Sorry, Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Owen O'Sullivan –

Mr Speaker, I beg to move that this House be adjourned sine die.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Is there a seconder to the Motion?

The Hon. Ian Rummery –

Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Honourable Rummery. The Motion is that this House be adjourned sine die. Any member wish to speak? Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we heard earlier in response to a question raised by my Honourable Colleague, the Honourable Cyril George, that SHG has not done or has any plans to undertake repairs to our built heritage sites and that SHG has no money to do so. As I understand it, in the 2007 DAPM, any budget surplus are retained in our Consolidated Fund and with DAPM agreement, this surplus would be used for infrastructure development. In our Economic Sustainable Development Plan, the SEDP, which stems from the Memorandum of Understanding, the MOU, the SEDP sets out that St Helena will be a tourism-driven economy. With this in mind and the enormous investment that HMG has made to the island by funding our airport, I believe that SHG must do everything in its power to show support in maintaining the island's built heritage. In fact, I believe that SHG should be leading the way. Not to do so, even with the other commitments and priorities we face, the tourism-driven economy as envisaged by our SEDP is going to be jeopardised as our built heritage will continue to deteriorate and in some cases disappear. The tourists we want to come will have nothing to see and our only chance of ever getting this island off grant-in-aid will be gone forever and that will happen because we will, as in many cases in the island's rich history, fail again. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we cannot allow this to happen nor can we continue to rely solely on organisations like the National Trust or other NGOs to be the only ones trying to maintain our built heritage. The answer for this not to happen lies in our hands and I would ask all Honourable Members to support this adjournment debate by agreeing that we negotiate at the next DAPM for a substantial one-off payment from our budget surplus to be earmarked to do projects of an urgent nature to our built heritage. Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Member for adjournment debate? Honourable Gavin Ellick?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in the few months I've been a LegCo member, there are some things, in my opinion, that needs to be looked at. They are the district and community roads, which are appalling and not being funded. St Helena needs to ensure these roads are made top priority. Thank you, Sir, that is all I got to say.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Member forHonourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I support the adjournment debate. Mr Speaker, I would just like to in this House thank all the members yesterday who supported our new Chairman of the Social and Community Development Committee, I think it was a good choice, although I was competing for this post myself, but we've got a good choice and I look forward in working with our new Chairman as a member of the Social and Community Development Committee and wish him well. The second thing is that I think the proceedings went very well for all of the new members, this is the actual first sitting of the new Government and I think that we're on the right track to improving a lot for the island as our economy grows and I wish them well as they proceed over the next four years. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Member wish to speak to the adjournment debate. The Honourable Cyril George?

The Hon. Cyril George –

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, thanks for giving me the opportunity to speak on the adjournment debate. I'd just like to add, my question yesterday concerning the heritage of St Helena. During my visit to South Africa on the Conference in Jo'burg and in discussions with various delegates from other Commonwealth countries, tourism are one of their main economic drivers and heritage is one of their topics that they are very aware that needs to be addressed and need to...and this is where a lot of their income is from tourism and heritage, visit of heritage sites. We have on the island a lot of built heritage, which we need to preserve and I hope that we can find additional funding to be able to achieve the repairs and whatever the requirements to repair our heritage sites. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Member wish to speak on the adjournment debate? The Honourable Anthony Green?

The Hon. Anthony Green –

Mr Speaker, I support the adjournment. First I'd like to congratulate the Honourable Les Baldwin on being elected as Chairman of the Social Community Development Committee and being nominated as a member of Executive Council. Speaking of social development, to me social development is now the key. With the physical construction of our airport progressing well it should be completed on time. Economic development equally needs to make good progress, but I believe that economic development should from now on be driven through our social development needs. It's the only way that everyone will accept change and is the only way that changes will get rooted into our society. This would be development by the people for the people. For example, if, say, in setting a health policy, its primary objective would then be to underpin the social needs of the community. Matters like this will be complex and maybe it might be useful for issues like these to be openly debated. It's only through exchanges of different opinion that the best results will come. A Socratic Society perhaps. Affordable housing also came up yesterday and how sad it is that Council, having given full approval for the Housing Strategy to be implemented that eighteen months on there appears to have been little progress. Money on an expensive consultancy and a huge amount of time and effort spent seem to have fallen by the wayside. This is not acceptable. The Memorandum of Understanding, MOU, was mentioned yesterday. It reminded me that one of the four conditions signed up by the Governor on our behalf and the Secretary of State in 2010 was to have a communication and dissemination plan for Saints overseas, this to ensure that we engage these people's support. I'm not convinced that we have sufficiently engaged with the Saints on the Falklands and Ascension Island. From a governance perspective, I'd like to express concerns that the Public Accounts Committee is not up and running properly. Finally, Mr Speaker, it's been Cancer Awareness Week which prompts me to say how well our little St Helena does in fundraising. All the organisers are to be congratulated for their efforts for such a worthy cause. Thank you, Mr Speaker, I support the adjournment.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Nigel Dollery?

The Hon. Nigel Dollery –

Mr Speaker, this may not be the appropriate forum, but I will say it anyway. As we move towards a community which is reliant more and more on tourism, I'm very shocked to have had people contact me saying they cannot get some of the basics of life, which is currency. They cannot get sterling easily and they cannot get South African Rand easily. I've had reported to me that you go to the Bank they say it is a Government problem, you go to the Government, I do not know what their response is, but as our tourist numbers grow, we all know that the need for cash currency, both sterling and South African Rand is going to grow. If we're not planning for that now, what on earth are we doing? This is when it's easy, a few extra tourists, a few muck ups by not going to Ascension and being able to pick up sterling from there and already our population are feeling the shortage. It is not appropriate that we do nothing. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the adjournment debate. Mr Speaker, it is pleasing to report that this Council has taken the Roy Sainsbury's report seriously and given the report priority. From 1st December 2013, we will see the introduction of the Minimum Income Standard, which will help relieve a lot of people of further hardship, who are currently on Income Related Benefits and the Basic Island Pension. However, there are further recommendations from the review needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency if more people in our society is to benefit. This will require changes to the Social Security Ordinance and Regulations. Such changes needs to happen in early 2014 if people is to see the benefits for 1st April 2014 and as a member of the Social and Community Development Committee, I would do all I can to see that these changes are made to the system.

Mr Speaker, another area where we need to see some financial growth is in our Carer System. We have a case where the Government has given a commitment for the elderly, disabled and vulnerable people to remain in their family homes as long as they possibly can, yet the funding allocated is nowhere near adequate. A Carer providing fulltime care only receives a partial Care Allowance. Elderly citizens who need support care are not able to find the care they need since the hourly rate paid is only £2.00 some odd pence. In setting the budget for next year, I do hope that Council will give reasonable consideration for an improvement in the budget for Carers.

In our official, opening session of Legislative Council in July, I reported how the clients and staff in our Care Establishments reported how frustrated they were in not being able to go on a day's outing or have some access to the shops and the clients at Deason Centre and Cape Villa not being able to go to the Community Care Complex in Half Tree Hollow for a Day's Centre entertainment. I recently had a call from a client at Deasons reporting that arrangements are being made for the clients to go to the Community Care Complex for a day's outing; they were very pleased about this. Mr Speaker, this needs to happen on a more regular basis, to let these people see that we do appreciate and care for them and they are not just left to remain in the care establishments.

There is concern in the private sector from the construction and farming industries where most building materials and farming products, including seeds and animal feeds, are being charged at 20% duty at Customs. If we are to encourage more housebuilding, fresh vegetables and meat production, then we clearly need to support these industries by offering a more attractive duty rate than 20% at Customs. I trust that Council will support this issue in reviewing and addressing our Customs duty.

In support of the development of private sector growth, a commitment was given to the private sector employees that conditions of service, such as leave, pay and sick leave, etc, would be addressed this year. Again, I trust that this Council will provide the support to the private sector employees in ensuring that the relevant legislation is put into place.

Turning to driving over 70 years of age. Representations have been made, Mr Speaker, that in order to continue to drive each year before renewing their driving licence, those persons over 70 need to obtain a medical certificate from the Doctor as to their continued competence to drive. Whereas the medical examinations in some cases might be necessary, in the interest of public safety, the tests required are very basic and these people over 70 are expected to pay £9.70 for a very basic medical examination, and, in addition to that, a further £12.10 for their drivers licence. In many cases, this is rather costly to our elderly folk as many are just in receipt of a small pension and depend on their driving to assist with their daily requirements. Mr Speaker, on behalf of these people, I will address the issue with the Police Directorate and the relevant Committee to see what can be done to assist these people.

Mr Speaker, turning to rubbish. An initiative is being launched by Enterprise St Helena to clean and beautify St Helena which is really needed if we are going to be successful in promoting our island for economic growth through tourism. What bothers me is to see the number of abandoned vehicles lying around. Take for instance Jamestown, a vehicle has been parked at China Lane for the best part of two years. The parking area in Barracks Square is being used as a dumping ground for abandoned vehicles. It is my understanding that if a vehicle is to be parked on the road, including parking areas, then they must be fully licensed and insured. I am sure in many incidents this is not the case. The Police need to take some action and have these vehicles moved. Again, Mr Speaker, I will be speaking to the Police Directorate on this issue.

Our Duke of Edinburgh playground is a disaster waiting to happen. The trees are overgrown, the Director of A&NRD has done their bit in removing what branches they can, but do not have the capability of reaching the most dangerous type branches. I recommend that the Government address this issue as a matter of priority before someone is seriously injured. These trees have really overgrown and are not safe. Furthermore, I understand that the funding has been removed from the Education Department to pay the Cleaner for cleaning the playground. I have been made to understand that the responsibility now lies with Crown Estates. In talking to Crown Estates, they do not have a budget to employ somebody. The playground is a health and safety issue and action is needed in terms of cutting the trees back to prevent the limbs from falling and injuring someone and ensuring that the area is kept clean.

Mr Speaker, turning to apprenticeships. It is pleasing to see at long last an Apprenticeship Scheme funded and running. There seems to be a high level of interest shown in the Scheme. However, I do see in the months ahead that the Scheme will need to be fine tuned if it is to meet the specialist skills requirement that the island needs.

Mr Speaker, there is also concern from our local Government pensioners as to when the Motion, which was fully supported in this House in February of this year, which will allow those pensioners who are in receipt of a pension less than £350 per month to receive free medical care, I sincerely trust that the Public Health Committee will treat this Motion with some priority with a view of having it implemented.

Finally, Mr Speaker, there is concern from the public that there is a need for a disabled park to be placed in the heart of Jamestown, possibly directly at the back of the Canister where there is the pavement, to make it much more accessible for disabled to have easier access to the main shops in Jamestown. There is a disabled park in front of the Public Library, as well as near the Museum. These parks are not near the heart of the town where the shopping areas are, so I do trust that the Environmental and Natural Resources Committee through the

Highways Authority will take this onboard and allocate a park near the Canister to assist the disabled. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Member? The Honourable Wilson Duncan?

The Hon. Wilson Duncan –

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I support the adjournment. In view of the huge subsidy being paid to the South Atlantic Media Services, SAMS, by St Helena Government, I would like to see the farmers subsidised so that they can purchase new seedlings etc so they can produce more food for the island. Now, I know the outcry from those in authority will be for the farmers to apply for finance through the Bank of St Helena, but what will happen if their crops fail due to lack of rain or disease? How will they be able to afford to repay the Bank loan? There need to be more than mere words. Farmers, along with the fishing industry, when there are lean times, such as the present, need to receive subsidy to encourage them to invest more in their industry. They will do this if they know they are in receipt of subsidy as farming and fishing are not like any normal industry. I realise that this is not the United Kingdom, but they, together with the European Community, recognise the importance of farmers and pay them enormous subsidies irrespective of whether their crops fail or not. It seems to me that only the St Helena Government don't place any importance on their farming and fishing industries. What would happen if the farmers suffer the loss of their entire crop and don't have the finance to purchase new seed? It would mean that all our vegetables etc would have to be imported, but if they were subsidised they will have the money to purchase new seed. And what, if through frustration, they decided not to farm at all? It would leave the island in a precarious situation. Farmers and fishermen, who risk their lives whenever they go fishing, are by nature very proud people and wouldn't ask for help, but they wouldn't have the need to if they received adequate subsidy. I call on the St Helena Government to recognise the importance of farmers and fishermen and to pay them a subsidy. Thank you, Mr Speaker, I support the adjournment.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Member wish to speak on the adjournment debate? Honourable Ian Rummery?

The Hon. Ian Rummery –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the adjournment debate. Last Friday saw the Public Release summary of the Lucy Faithful Foundation's Report on Child Safety on Ascension and St Helena. I will restrict my comments to the Report's findings on St Helena. This document can be found on the SHG website or I can print a copy for anyone who wishes to read it. The Lucy Faithful Foundation is a UK Charity that works for a Society where children are free from sexual abuse and exploitation. Their mission is to prevent abuse from happening by working in partnership with voluntary and statutory sector professionals as well as the general public. They are well respected in the research field and conduct research on – the nature, extent and probable causes of sexual offending, the effects on victims and their families, the effective prevention of offending, the assessment, treatment and rehabilitation of offenders or likely offenders. As part of the Safeguarding Children in the Overseas Territories Programme, they were invited to St Helena to conduct a Child Safety Review. Their main and most disturbing finding was that, and I quote from the Report, "There were problems relating to the premature sexual activity with teenage girls, some of which was

clearly abusive and exploitative. The grooming of girls in their early teenage years by older men was seen as an issue in need of comprehensive attention.” The Report acknowledged that efforts in St Helena to address this issue have met with some success, but there is much more that can be done. This is an issue that we cannot ignore. Protection of children and young people from harm is our greatest responsibility as a community. Failure to do so can have devastating consequences. The US Surgeon General has stated “Severe and repeated trauma during youth may have enduring effects upon both neurobiological and psychological development, altering stress **responsivity** and altering adult behaviour patterns. These individuals experience a greatly increased risk of mood, anxiety and personality disorders throughout adult life. From my experience as working as Psychiatric Nurse, one of the most common experiences of patients in a Psychiatric Hospital was a history of sexual abuse. This was true of every hospital I worked in, from inner city NHS hospitals to one of the most expensive private hospitals in the UK. The Lucy Faithful Report will form the basis of a series of actions to combat the threat to our community from child sexual abuse. This will include educational initiatives, strengthening social work training and provision of treatment and supervision for convicted sex offenders. I urge all in the House, indeed, all of us on this island, to make the vision of the Lucy Faithful Foundation for a society where children are free from sexual abuse and exploitation a reality. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there any other Honourable Member who wish to speak to the adjournment debate? Honourable Bernice Olsson?

The Hon. Bernice Olsson –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I hope you’ll forgive me, but I would like to talk about something which has not been discussed for a long time. We, the people of St Helena, through the Air Access Project, are trying to become members of the big, outside world. We want tourism and visitors to come to the island in significant numbers to support our economy. Procedures and measures are being put in place to protect us against disasters and risks. However, with the exposure to the outside world, we will always face risks. I want to talk about our local currency, the St Helena Pound. What we have got, risk management and all kinds of expertise available, but I have not heard anybody highlighting the vulnerability of St Helena in this respect. What St Helena Government did in 1976 was to take away all the British pounds on the island and purchase gilts with the money. In those days, it offered a high interest rate and so we were told to launch your own currency, which could be sold to collectors and visitors, in the same way we sold the St Helena stamps. The world has changed. St Helena is getting a pittance for its investments. Most of the world has moved towards a low interest economy. We do not make much money from our gilts and deposits overseas. My point is therefore why do we keep the St Helena pound? It does not benefit us much, now with falling interest rates and it cannot be seen as a benefit to us much in the future as the interest rate will probably remain at a very low level, during our lifetime at least. At the same time, we have to print and be responsible for our own currency, the St Helena pound. Mr Speaker, if you see where the rest of the world is going how can we have a large influx of visitors without anybody having the temptation to counterfeit St Helena pounds. With a decent colour printer and a suitable paper, you can print how much money you want if you know what you’re doing. The risk of being caught is minimal. St Helena is dependent on people being honest, it would not take much to flood the market with counterfeit money and therefore it is not obvious the St Helena pound will prove to be more of a liability than an asset. The fact is we do not make much profit from it and it is a very obvious deterrent to our visitors and long-time tourists. Furthermore, if you need to go away, maybe for medical

reasons, the exchange value of our currency is a real problem, and most overseas Banks will not cash them or accept them. It is also worth to remember, one of the biggest risks we face as we step into the future is simply that we have no control over their future value. Probably, more important, is that we should understand how vulnerable we are to counterfeiters. A St Helena five pound note in circulation is printed on anything, from something almost like a bit of cardboard or something like a bit of toilet paper. Let us pre-empt the problem and reintroduce British currency in its entirety. Don't let Saints be the people who pay if it goes wrong. Also, if you compare a British sterling note and a St Helena note the security features do not exist on the St Helena note, which makes them extremely simple to reproduce. Mr Speaker, to avoid unnecessary risks and make ourselves more attractive to tourism, we should abandon the St Helena pound and adopt the sterling as our currency as soon as possible. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member, thank you very much. Is there any other Honourable Member wishing to speak on the adjournment debate? No? Any ex officio member want to speak? Alright, otherwise I will ask the Mover to wind, would you like to wind.....Yes, of course you can. Is there anybody else and I don't want to leave you out if you want to speak to the adjournment. Already then, can we suspend the sitting for ten minutes, please, and then give the Chief Secretary opportunity to wind up. Thank you very much.

Council suspended.

Council resumed.

The Speaker –

Please be seated. Honourable Members, Council is resumed and when we adjourned we were on the adjournment debate. The Honourable Mover would like to speak to the debate, please?

The Hon. Owen O'Sullivan –

Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to respond in this adjournment debate. I'd first like to take this opportunity to welcome the new elected members after the Election. The first few months of officials working with the new Councillors has been collaborative and cooperative in working jointly towards developing St Helena. Government has to work together to ensure that St Helena profits from the once in a lifetime opportunity of the opening of the airport. Time is rapidly ticking down; we now have less than two and a half years. Only through all working together will we be able to get to where we need to be when the first plane lands. I commend the new elected members for their actions to date. I also congratulate elected members on the quality of the debate in the Motions. I listened with particular interest to the debate on the Health Service. I'd like to take this opportunity to publicly state my support for the hardworking staff in the Health Service under the leadership of the new Director of Health and the Clinical Director. There is work to be done, but I am confident that we will see significant improvements in the Health Service during their tenure. I also welcome the debate on openness and transparency. I understand that a number of new Councillors have been surprised at how open and transparent Government is. Though we can always improve, I don't think the gap is as wide as it had been perceived in the debate leading up to the election.

I will now touch briefly on each of the contributions from the Honourable Members. The Honourable Lawson Henry and the Honourable Cyril George spoke about the need for

heritage funding. Under the 2007 DAPM Aide Memoire, as the Honourable Member made note, money can be put into the infrastructure from the Consolidated Fund. This is for reasonable needs, such as water, electricity, health, roads, and so on. Though I recognise heritage is important, we have even greater basic needs that need to be delivered. The capital programme is massively over budget already. However, some good news is that DFID has provided an additional £900,000 this year for the basic needs in this financial year.

I now move on to the Honourable Gavin Ellick and he talked about district and community roads not being funded. It is for Councillors, as has been said in a number of the debates, to provide district and community roads funding as part of the budget process.

Like the Honourable Brian Isaac, I congratulate the Honourable Les Baldwin as the new Chair of the Social and Development Committee and look forward to working with him.

I now turn to the Honourable Tony Green and like him I would like to see a full functioning PAC as soon as possible.

Both the Honourable Nigel Dollery and the Honourable Bernice Olsson talked about currency. SHG has the responsibility to **pro???** the St Helenian pound, which has parity with the British pound. However, we can give a commitment to review the currency arrangements as they are and the possibility of using UK sterling.

I now move on to the Honourable Derek Thomas and the Honourable Wilson Duncan. They talked about farming and fishing subsidies. At the moment, farmers and fishermen are supported by SHG; farmers and fishermen do not pay income tax, they are supported by grant through Enterprise St Helena, for example, polytunnels and all fishermen are given a fuel subsidy, which equates to the fuel being provided at cost. As was mentioned by the Honourable Wilson Duncan, farming and fishing is unique, however, so is the media, which is why across the world nations provide subsidies, best known example being the BBC.

I now turn to the Honourable Ian Rummery's comments on the Lucy Faithful Foundation and the report. I would like to fully support the Honourable Ian Rummery's words about the Lucy Faithful Report. I myself have two young girls and would like to feel that they can grow up safely in a society free from abuse. I take its findings very seriously and will be looking to take forward recommendations as a matter of priority.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to respond and I apologise if I haven't touched on all the Members' points, but I've tried to touch on as many as I can. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member.

Question that the House be adjourned sine die, put and agreed to.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Members, it's just for me to say thank you very much for this first, preliminary, initial debate in this House, on your maiden voyage, perhaps? All of you have tried hard and done well and we'll see some more debates probably later. I just want to make you understand, however, that when Motions are passed, you need yourselves to take some action on it, Government does not take action immediately on the Motion, you need to take some action yourselves on the Motions that you passed, otherwise they have no substantive meaning, okay? Thank you very much indeed.

Council is adjourned sine die.