

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL TOP LINES - TUESDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2020

Development Application: Partial Demolition and Erection of a Single Storey Building to Provide Improved Facilities to Judicial Buildings, Grand Parade

- **Executive Council granted Full Development Permission, with Conditions, for the partial demolition and erection of a single storey building to provide improved facilities to Judicial Buildings, Grand Parade**

- ExCo sat in planning mode for this item
- This development application is seeking to deliver the next stage of the Judicial Relocation Project. As the project is funded under the Capital Programme it came to ExCo for a decision
- The proposal is to partially demolish the two small single storey lean-to rear buildings in order to erect a single storey extension to provide service rooms and toilet facilities for the Judicial Building. The proposal also includes disabled access to the buildings and internal refurbishment of the building which includes improved accessibility to enable users with disabilities to be better facilitated in these civic buildings
- The Chief Planning Officer (CPO) took Members through a presentation of the Planning Application and the proposed works
- Members were advised that one representation had been received from the Heritage Society raising concern that the application was not subject to an environment and heritage assessment and the proposed design for the ramp was inadequate. The applicant had addressed these issues through changes in the design and the CPO drew attention to the fact that the revised proposal put forward is much better in design terms and with an improvement on the current position
- The Land Development Control Authority (LDCA) did not have any concerns with the application and were content with the CPO's recommendation to approve the application subject to the Conditions outlined
- During discussions Members raised concerns regarding ramps being included in the original design where the floor of the proposed extension had been elevated. They were reassured by the CPO that the floor level had been amended to be level with the floor of the Court Room which meant there would be no requirement for a ramp into the Court Room and the Meeting Rooms from the rear extension as both floors would be same level to enable disabled access
- Other concerns raised were:
 - Facilities availability - Members were reassured that facilities had been approved for users of the building and clients
 - Issues with the room for defence clients being adjacent to the room for prosecution clients - Members were advised that this was an administrative matter and not a planning issue
 - The involvement of the St Helena Fire & Rescue Service (SHFRS) - CPO advised that the SHFRS will be consulted as part of the Building Regulation process as this was a building control matter
- Members remarked on the benefit of having visited the Court Room building to see the proposed changes and were content that issues raised by the one representation had been dealt with

- Members were pleased to see this project under the Economic Development Investment Programme (EDIP) coming together under Phase 2 and hoped that we would soon see the benefits of the project
- Background can be found in the ExCo Memo - <https://www.sainthelena.gov.sh/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/77-2020-Improvements-to-Judicial-Building.pdf>

St Helena Tourism COVID-19 Recovery Strategy

- **Executive Council considered and endorsed the St Helena Tourism COVID-19 Recovery Strategy**
- In April 2020, the Governor tasked the Tourist Office with creating a post COVID-19 Tourism Strategy
- In developing the Strategy, the Tourist Office consulted with a variety of stakeholders
- The Recovery Strategy is based on the following assumptions:
 - Air access: assuming the gateway will remain South Africa. St Helena Government (SHG) will establish a contingency plan with data being gathered on direct flights to UK
 - COVID-19 measures: majority of people will not travel to St Helena whilst quarantine measures are in place
 - Availability of travel insurance: There are few insurance companies that will provide cancellation policies and emergency medical cover as a result of COVID-19
- The Director of Tourism presented the Strategy to Council and highlighted that it is difficult at this time to assess how the local tourism sector can recover from the pandemic. The strategy is therefore a phased approach framework based on planning for and adapting to global circumstances, which sets out how we can continue to work with the tourism industry until the Island can reopen for normal business
- The Recovery Strategy focuses on promoting the Island in the Immediate to Short Term (estimated to 31 March 2021). The Strategy aims to utilise Armchair Tourism, using digital platforms to keep St Helena in the forefront of people's minds whilst they are unable to travel internationally. During this time, the Strategy focuses on Island readiness for when travel starts again. This includes upskilling, best practice development, product maintenance and tourism infrastructure enhancement
- In the Medium to Long Term (estimated from 2021), to start the flow of visitors, the Strategy will focus on the promotion of the products that had drawn the visitors before the pandemic, with the Tourist Office identifying Marine Tourism and Walking/Hiking as some of the biggest attractions
- Members noted that being 'COVID-Free' would also be somewhat of an attraction and should be used in promotion of the Island
- Members were pleased that we have a strategy and plan for the future and were encouraged by the fact that the plan is flexible and can be adapted, which is what is needed due to the uncertainties surrounding the pandemic
- Our main products of walking and hiking were noted by Members who requested that ongoing work continue to keep walking trails on the Island maintained as well as directing our limited resources to marine activities to

generate more income for the Island and online marketing of our hotel availability

- The idea of virtual and armchair tourism was welcomed and it was felt that this is where we should be focusing our efforts by continuing to push our marketing via digital platforms at the moment as this will have benefits for the Island in the long run
- Members were particularly keen to continue promoting St Helena to the wider world and to take the opportunity to keep the pressure on local businesses to keep developing and exploring new innovative ideas to enhance the tourism product on the Island. It is important that we keep the Island at the forefront of people's minds and take advantage of people in lockdown staying at home and thinking of holidays
- Discussion ensued around ticket prices for Saints wanting to come back home or visit the Island. The Financial Secretary was able to advise that the pricing structure is currently being considered by the Tax & Revenue Working Group and remarked that the strategy highlights that we need to be resilient and focus on other areas of our economy
- It was asked whether thought had been given to different types of tourism in the interim period i.e. longer holidays where people might visit the Island during winter in the Northern hemisphere. The Director of Tourism advised that this was being considered and they are currently dealing with a few similar enquiries that have come through
- Members noted the Strategy had already been approved by the Economic Development Committee and felt it was a good strategy and were satisfied and content for it to be taken forward. St Helena Tourism were wished every success in doing this
- The Strategy was described as a blueprint for the Tourist Office to follow to keep St Helena in the minds of potential travellers and prepare the Island for when travel is once again open
- Background can be found in the ExCo Memo - <https://www.sainthelena.gov.sh/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/78-2020-Tourism-Recovery-Strategy-Nov-2020.pdf>

First Supplementary Appropriation (2020/21) Bill 2020

- **Council noted the draft Supplementary Estimates and advised that the First Supplementary Appropriation (2020/21) Bill, 2020, should be printed, published and presented as Government Business at the next formal meeting of Legislative Council to be held on 11 December 2020**
- The Financial Secretary talked Members through the reasons for the Supplementary Appropriation Bill
- In 2019/20, the full allocation of financial aid of £3.5 million was claimed for St Helena Airport Limited (SHAL) operations from the Foreign, Commonwealth, & Development Office (FCDO)
- The total expenditure claimed by SHAL for 2019/20 was £3.0 million. As a result, £0.5 million of the 2019/20 financial aid for Airport operations is held in the Consolidated Fund and these unspent funds were ring fenced by FCDO for SHAL capital requirements in this financial year

- SHAL presented a Business Case to SHG and FCDO, seeking approval to fund the procurement of a road sweeper for the Airport runway in 2020/21 from the unspent financial aid granted for 2019/20. This was approved
- It is estimated that £230,000 will be required for the sweeper, this comprises the indicative purchase cost and includes a contingency for any potential difference to the original quotation, freight and other associated costs to bring the asset fully operational
- Approval in the form of a Supplementary Appropriation Ordinance is required to withdraw £230,000 from the Consolidated Fund to enable the sweeper to be procured during 2020/21
- This request is the first request for a withdrawal from the Consolidated Fund since the appropriation of the annual budget for 2020/21
- Members questioned whether the road sweeper could be a shared asset with the Roads Section – they were advised it wouldn't but in addition to use on the runway SHAL could consider using it as part of tidying up other areas of the Airport
- Members recognised that the funding was already available and was ring fenced for this type of spend
- Members recognised this equipment was vital for the safety of the Airport and were content to give their full support for this to be purchased from the SHAL underspend last year
- It was assured that the sweeper would be bought new and would be subject to SHAL procurement rules
- Members agreed for the Bill to be endorsed and passed to LegCo for their debate and approval at the next formal LegCo meeting
- Background can be found in the ExCo Memo - <https://www.sainthelena.gov.sh/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/79-2020-First-Supplementary-Appropriation-Bill-2020.pdf>

Any Other Business

Pledge for Nature

- **Executive Council agreed for St Helena to acknowledge the Leaders Pledge for Nature and for the Environment & Natural Resources Committee to move forward and identify how the Island can contribute within its limited resources**
- Political leaders participating in the United Nations Summit on Biodiversity in September 2020, representing 78 countries from all regions and the European Union, have committed to reversing biodiversity loss by 2030
- Members recognised that it would be positive for the Island for St Helena to show support and willingness to be involved in this Pledge for Nature
- It was noted that St Helena could only do what limited resources would allow, and that the Island could not commit to something unachievable.

ExCo

17 November 2020