

ST. HELENA
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

THE SPEAKER

The Honourable Cyril Keith Gunnell

ELECTED MEMBERS

The Honourable Rosemary June Bargo
The Honourable Gillian Ann Brooks
The Honourable Mark Alan Brooks
The Honourable Ronald Arthur Coleman
The Honourable Jeffrey Robert Ellick
The Honourable Corinda Sebastiana Stuart Essex
The Honourable Martin Dave Henry
The Honourable Robert Charles Midwinter
The Honourable Christine Lilian Scipio
The Honourable Julie Dorne Thomas
The Honourable Andrew James Turner

OVERSEAS

The Honourable Karl Gavin Thrower

PROCEEDINGS OF MINISTERS QUESTION TIME

Tuesday, 25th April, 2023

The Council met at 10.00 am
In the Council Chamber, Jamestown

(The Honourable Speaker in the Chair)

ORDER OF THE DAY

1. FORMAL ENTRY OF THE SPEAKER

2. ADDRESS BY THE SPEAKER

Good morning Honourable Members and everyone else who may be present. Welcome and a very warm welcome also, to all those listening to this live broadcast by SAMS of the second Minister's Question Time being held today in the Council Chamber at the Castle, Jamestown. Honourable Members, before continuing may I pause to offer sincere congratulations to the Honourable Councillor Gillian Brooks. In accordance with section 37 H 1 B of the Constitution Council Gillian Brooks has been appointed the temporary Minister for the Safety, Security and Home Affairs Portfolio. This appointment took effect from Monday the 24th of April 2023 until the 1st of June 2023. While the substantive Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs Portfolio, Honourable Jeffrey Ellick is off Island. Councillor Gillian Brooks, congratulations on your appointment. Thank you Honourable Members for your contributions to this very important activity an activity that was able to commence on 24th of March 2023 as a direct result of painstaking amendments made to the Standing Orders of the Legislative Council, which were implemented once new Standing Orders took effect from 16th of December 2022. Minister's Question Time, improves democracy, cementing improved transparency and accountability. We are all aware that the public health for some time be looking forward to regular Minister's Question Time sessions. Elected Members have decided they should take place once every month. Can I take this opportunity to say thank you to those members of the public that have provided feedback and in respect of the Minister's Question Time held on 24th March 2023 and we encourage you to continue providing feedback. As I said in my last address, Minister's Question Time is regulated by Standing Orders and a number of rules. Teething difficulties can be expected in early settings. During a practice session, the Elected Members found that when applying Order 9 of Standing Orders in its entirety, rule 6 imposed only one supplementary question for each substantive question. And this prevented thorough exploration of the issue raised and initial response given. There may well be other issues that Elected Members will identify that will require review and formal changes made to their Standing Orders or Elected Members feel that any proposed changes should be made after Minister's Question Time has been trialled further, and this should include due consideration of any comments that the public may already have made or may still make. This sitting has to be considered part of the trial period and additional feedback is welcomed. If I may, can I take you back

to the Formal Legislative Council Meeting held on 24th of March 2023. At that meeting, a resolution determined that rule 5 and rule 6 of Standing Order 9 be suspended for the duration of that Minister's Question Time. The topic was “progress made in achieving the St Helena Government’s vision and strategy dated April 2022 to March 2025”. The suspension of Standing Orders allowed Non Ministers additional supplementary questions, but not only that, because the topic chosen was very broad and because parts of it cross cutting or related to activities undertaken within a particular Portfolio that other Ministers was in charge. It allowed another Minister if they decided to assisted answering the question and they indicated their intention to do so by switching on the red light. So back to this Minister's Question Time for today in accordance with Order 9 rule 3 of Standing Orders, the Chief Minister was notified of the topic of business to be transacted. That topic is “Tourism Development”. The Chief Minister accordingly acknowledged receipt up the topic, and Non Ministers have framed their questions. All of the questions repaired by Non Ministers are addressed to the Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development, the Honourable Mark Brooks. The questions have been listed in alphabetical order, but will be selected at randomly for response, the duration of Minister's Question Time. Starting from the first question is one hour. The Clerk and timekeeper for this sitting is Miss Shanice Phillips. Honourable Members let’s go to work. Miss Phillips may we have the first question please.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –
Mr Speaker, may I rise on a point of order?

The Speaker –
You may.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –
Thank you. This pertains to suspension of Standing Orders in accordance with order 19 and order 21 of the standing orders of the Legislative Council.

The Speaker –
Is there a seconder? Councillor Midwinter.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –
Mr Speaker, I’d like to second.

The Speaker –
Thank you, Honourable Corinda Essex, Honourable Dr Corinda Essex you may proceed with your motion.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –
Thank you Mr Speaker. I beg to move that rule 5 and rule 6 of Order 9 of Standing Orders be suspended for the duration of Minister's Question Time to be held today. This motion seeks to suspend rule 6 of Order 9 of Standing Orders so that the restriction to only one supplementary question per each substantive question will not apply. This should help to satisfy the public that Minister's Question Time plays an important part in increasing openness, transparency and accountability, which are all central principles of good governance. In order for the parameters for questions in the House, as set out in Order 8 to be applicable following suspension of rule 6 of Order 9 it is necessary to suspend Rule 5 also. Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Does anyone else wish to speak? No one. So I put the question that rule 5 and rule 6 of Standing Order 9 is suspended for the duration of this Minister's Question Time.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker –

Clerk the next item of business please.

3. QUESTIONS

Question No. 1 - The Honourable Rosemary Bargo to ask the Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development.

The Speaker –

Honourable Rosemary Bargo?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I would like to declare my interest as an owner of a hospitality business. Mr Speaker can the Honourable Minister for Treasury Infrastructure and Sustainable Development tell this Council if funding will be made available to allow businesses on St Helena to engage the expertise of marketing personnel to assist them in marketing their businesses to reach the wider market, whether local or internationally.

The Speaker –

Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development?

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. And I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for her question. Before I begin Mr Speaker, could I share with you in congratulating Councillor Gilly Brooks on her temporary appointment for Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs and just to say, welcome her to the Ministerial team and look forward to working with her over the next couple of months.

The Speaker –

Thank you.

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development) –

Mr Speaker. Tourism is a wide reaching topic, which I think all Portfolios play a part, whether it be big or small in some way in achieving our strategy in Tourism Development. And so I have asked my Ministers, if there's any questions that they feel is relevant to the Tourism Recovery Strategy that is more or less worked on by their Portfolio that they would join in and how to answer it. As I feel that Tourism Development is everybody's business, including the Elected Members sitting here today. So, Mr Speaker, without further ado, I will try to answer my Honourable Members question on "Is there any funding available for businesses on St Helena to engage in expertise in the marketing personnel". So as Members are aware, there has been an element of a ring fence funding package for Tourism Recovery. Now that

funding package was approved by the FCDO just recently a few weeks ago, and has been communicated to the public. However, we are still working on the details on what and how we actually implement that funding, and try to reach the most benefits for the tourism sector as a whole. 500,000 might sound like a lot of money to some individuals but when you're trying to run a whole tourism sector, and recovery from what the whole world has just been through, it doesn't go a long way. And we need to make it go as far as possible and also to demonstrate that we are capable of organizing and spending the funding, in order for us to demonstrate that we deserve to have an additional funding. I can't say at this time, Mr Speaker, that there will be funding available to allow businesses to engage with expertise of marketing personnel. But overall, the funding is good to increase the marketing product on St Helena, and to increase our availability to different industries around the world that will tap into our marketing efforts in order to sell the Island to their customers. If we do employ new or more resources, if we do put funding into more resources, Mr Speaker, to develop our marketing efforts, then I'm sure that we can incorporate some of that work with that individual or that personnel, to help the private sector businesses achieve what they want to achieve. So there might be an element where a certain individual who has marketing experience employed should as funding could hold workshops where they invite sorry, local businesses to join in. So they can share on their experience and the professionalism as in how to market it, accommodation or restaurant and so on. But as much detail as I can give it this time, Mr Speaker, because we are very early stages in deciding how that money will be spent. And of course, from the recurrent budget, we're still not at the place where we have allocated our budget yet. So I can't say if any money will be allocated from the recurrent budget into marketing efforts for the private sector. So thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member for that detail, Honourable Rosemary Bargo?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

Thank you Mr Speaker, and thank you my Honourable friend. Mr Speaker can I just make a statement as such?

The Speaker –

But is it relevant to that?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

Yes, I believe that, you know, for St Helena to be successful, we need to ensure that all businesses are you know, thought about, to enable us to sell the tourism package to people overseas. So I believe, you know, we need to be at every business in mind and how we can find ways to you know, develop everyone, not just a few. Okay. And also, I would like to take this opportunity, Mr Speaker to congratulate my friend and colleague, Minister Brooks. Off course I congratulated her personally but publicly, I would like to congratulate you on your achievements. Well done. Okay.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Are you going to ask a supplementary question?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

Not at this time.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Anybody else wants to ask questions. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister, please state within what timeframe the 500,000 ring fenced funding has to be spent.

The Speaker –

Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I like to thank my Honourable friend for the question. My understanding it is a one year ring fence funding so my understanding would be that we would have to spend that money within the year. So, yes, Mr Speaker, we have a year to spend that funding was my understanding. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Given the short time frame, considering we're already nearly one quarter into the year. Can the Honourable Minister please indicate the date by which he hopes that the details of how the funding will be spent will have been finalised?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'd like to thank my Honourable friend for her question. So I can confirm that work has already started in a detailed plan on how that money will be spent. I have seen the first draft of that document. However, I do think it needs a bit more work. And of course, that document still needs to be shared with Cabinet and the wider Council. But I know that there's suggestions in that, in that document on how we deliver this is to set up a Project Board. So almost treat this 500K like a project to deliver with key KPIs and targets to set, for that project board to deliver, which will help us to identify where the areas that didn't do so well. And the areas that it did so well, hopefully by the end of this year, or end of this financial year, in order to put together a business case for how we continue to develop with our tourism sector going forward for years 24/25.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Next question please.

Question No. 2 - The Honourable Andrew Turner to ask the Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Andrew Turner?

The Hon. Andrew Turner –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Treasury Infrastructure and Sustainable Development tell this council, what plans do SHG have to restore and maintain tourism sites around the island?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development?

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. And I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. So as we all know, SHG has a, under their disposal is a capital program, part of funding which is EDIP. So work has already begun through that EDIP funding to look at essential infrastructure that is used to increase our tourism product. So for an example, the post box walks will be one of them. So there has been a business case put together to try and maintain some of those walks, increase the safety of those walks, and also increase the longevity of some of the infrastructure that allows those walks to be marketed as part of our product. We've also under the EDIP program put together some business cases, one is to improve the experience for visitors arriving by sea, and that is just maintenance on the landing steps. And also another business case has been put forward for review in increasing the accessibility from the middle steps which will help with swimmers and so on. So those are little things at the moment. Because again, as I said earlier, Mr Speaker, the ring fenced funding for the tourism recovery, some of that funding could go to infrastructure projects. It was suggested in the outline plans. And there might be an element of spending, a certain pot of money to maintain and restore some tourism sites around the island. As for which sites, that is because obviously we all know that that money is not going to restore all of the sites and because St Helena has such a rich culture, especially in the history side of it, Mr Speaker, there's too many to restore by doing all of them. So we have to choose carefully, which ones we choose, if we are going to put any funding in there. And obviously this will help also by the project board, which will identify some of them. And also I would encourage the public, as well as my elected colleagues to also put suggestions forward and what they think will be the priorities in any infrastructure development, or restoration work that has been done with this pot of funding. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member, Honourable Andrew Turner.

The Hon. Andrew Turner –

Thank you Mr Speaker on behalf of constituents, can the Minister say whether areas such as Sandy Bay Beach, in particular High Knoll Fort will be included as part of these plans?

The Speaker –

Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development) –

Mr Speaker, I can say that High Knoll Fort and Sandy Bay Beach has been talked about for a number of years and trying to do something or develop those areas so that we can offer it more higher up on the tourism product delivery. Right now, we can't really market as such, areas that is not safe, entirely safe to

our tourism. So for instance, I would, you know, I would shy away from telling anyone that Sandy Bay is a great area to visit, especially if you're not on St Helena, if you're just tourism because it is the road is pretty dangerous going down to Sandy Bay, you need to be able to be familiar with driving on steep hills and so on. And that's never going to change. But what we can do is look to improve the access at the very bottom, where the road actually leaves the tarmac and goes on to a dirt road, meaning that in able to access the beach nowadays, you're more likely to need a four by four than any vehicle. So obviously to increase that we would look at doing something with the access to the beach, before we do anything, regardless to the beach. I mean, it just makes perfect sense. No point in doing our facilities on the beach when half the population can't access it. But again, we need to set aside that whatever work we do in improving the infrastructure needs to be maintained. And that is one of the biggest problems with having a funding set aside for one year or funding to only plan over one year when you don't know what exactly, or how much will follow on from that or if there will be any other funding. So what we can do is, is basically take all of that into consideration. When looking at the priority areas, you know, one, will we be able to maintain that road, if we were to put the funding into restoring that road or doing up to a reasonable standard. So we'll, things that we do need to look at, but I concur with my Honourable friend that Sandy Bay Beach, and areas near the sea being on an island should be high up on the priority. Because I think, you know, we got a lot to offer. And there's a lot that we could expand on with regards to visitors and sea leisure visitors in particular. And also for the island's population, the community, everyone likes to enjoy the summer sort of around the seat areas. So yes, Mr Speaker, I think it's important that we look at those areas in its entirety but like I said, having the, always in the back of my mind that ability to maintain whatever, funding we put into that.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Honourable Martin Henry?

The Hon. Martin Henry (Minister for Health and Social Care) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. And if I could, Mr Speaker, just add to my Honourable friends answer, I would just see one of the intermediate solutions and something that we could do as an Island is obviously something like Sandy Bay Beach is a large, would be a large development, it would cost far more than, far exceeding the budget we have. But the one thing we can do is recommend that when tourists do come that they have guides to go to some of these places that are already not developed, but can go safely but someone who knows that trail, that then increases what we can do on the Island, we can have tour guides over that period and increase the income for St Helenians theirselves. So we can wrap on intermediate methods in between these large projects that we can still allow tourists to access such areas. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, the Ministers Portfolio has previously advised us that they were considering previous plans to install a permanent Zulu memorial at the top of Jacob's Ladder. However, this has been subject to budgetary constraints. Can the Minister now say that because we have this additional funding, whether those plans will now be progressed?

The Speaker –

Interesting. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development) –

Again Mr Speaker, I'd like to thank my Honourable Member for his question. But again, I think getting down into the details of how we spend that funding hasn't been finalised yet. And it needs to be finalised with all of Cabinet, all of my Ministerial colleagues, as the money wasn't just given to me alone it was given to the Island. And I do think like I said, at the beginning, we all do have a part to play. And I feel what my Honourable friend has alluded to is important. And it is something that we did undertake to do. And we shall, I think, within this year, try and make a real effort, even if it's not including the money within this ring fence fund, but including the money from some other budget to mark that memorial. And to mark that position on where it is at Ladder Hill, it was like I said, it was always my intention to do that. So thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you for that Honourable Member, Honourable Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Obviously, public toilets are a key issue at tourism sites, and business cases have been prepared and submitted for upgrading of public toilet facilities. Can the Honourable Minister give an update as to what point those business cases have reached?

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Minister Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. And I like to thank my Honourable colleague for her question. If I am totally honest, I am not entirely sure at what point those business case sits at the moment. What I have seen, or what I do know in this year is that 23 business cases was put forward under the micro projects for EDIP, and I think 3 was progressed by the review group. I'm not sure if any of the 23 was regard to a business case for improved toilet facilities. But I can find that information out and then feedback why that didn't get approved by the review group. But like I said, Mr Speaker, only under the assumption that there was business case put forward. What we have done over the last few months was obviously refurbished the toilets, at Jamestown Wharf, which is used hugely not just by the workers, but also by the diving community, and the tourist visitors as general as well as the community. And as I've said before, I think I've given an update either in this House or in one of the Elected Members Meetings that under the Rupert's project, there is a small building package element of that, which will include some toilet facilities and showers. And I have tasked my team with bringing that forward in the program so that those streams of work can continue to be implemented, so that the sooner we finish that, the sooner we will be able to offer improved facilities to the public and visitors. I do know from past that the toilets was identified as a need to do something about or need to restore, or to extend on a number of toilets in key areas. And I know under ESH, undertook some work to include this. Government over the years has also undertook some work to refurbish some of the Jamestown toilets. Two that springs to mind is the toilets by the Museum and the toilets at the Church or the Jamestown playground, which was done I think, as recently as two years ago. But I do recognise, Mr Speaker that there needs to be more facilities on the Island. And those facilities need to be maintained. That is the most important, well that is a huge importance of providing any more facilities, is that we're able to keep them clean and keep them in a state where they can be used by the public and the visitors. But it's too early to say exactly where it is or I don't have that information

here today, Mr Speaker to say we have those business cases, but I'm happy to find out for my Honourable friend and relay the information to her.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much Honourable Member, Honourable Minister Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio (Minister for Environment, Natural Resources and Planning) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I just like to confirm from the comment that my Honourable friend Minister Brooks mentioned, a business case for upgrading the toilets were submitted, and it's hoped that it was included in the 23 that Minister Brooks referred to. So I can confirm a business case was submitted under micro projects.

The Speaker –

Thank you for that extra information any further Honourable Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

On a point of clarification, was that one of the only three that were approved?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio (Minister for Environment, Natural Resources and Planning) –

I would not have that information, Mr Speaker, because I don't sit on the high level panel. My understanding that that is done by a different Portfolio. All portfolios were asked to submit business cases for the micro projects. And I'm just confirming that ENRP did submit a business case. What is concerning Mr Speaker, is the vandalism on the Island. St Helena Government does spend a lot of money in repairing the toilet facilities, which doesn't last very long. Because then it gets vandalized. I think we need to do more, we as the Government I'm talking about, we need to do more to try to educate and inform our community that they need to respect the properties on the Island because we can't continuously spending money. So in my personal opinion, Mr Speaker, is ignorance.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, can Honourable Minister Brooks help.

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development) –

Yes, just to clarify what my Honourable colleague asked whether they were approved. Just to say that that process hasn't happened yet. But it will happen. I believe the meeting is scheduled for early next month. So we'll go to the high level panel, which will approve the projects for this year's allocation of funding. But as soon as that do I think, that will be made public anyway, Mr Speaker, so I won't undertake to provide my Honourable friend with that information because I will provide the public with that information.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Next question please.

Question No. 3 - The Honourable Ronald Coleman to ask the Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development tell this Council, as we are already carrying out some work to protect and enhance our natural environment, can the Minister inform the House what plans are there to protect and enhance St Helena's rich built environment for all who live here and our visitors to enjoy? Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much Honourable Minister for Treasury Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker on this question, I was struggling to understand exactly what my Honourable friend is getting at. We are already carrying out some work to protect, enhance our natural environment, which I will agree there will be some work that was done by my Honourable friend, Minister Scipio's Portfolio in regards to the Marine Management Plan, and so on, which we all obviously participate in and we all felt was a really good management plan in protecting our marine environment. As regards to enhancing the rich built environment for all those who live, can I ask my Honourable friend, just if he could clarify what sort of, what part of the environment is he actually referring to? Is it our built heritage? Or is it just building on what we've built so far? It's just the way you interpret the word "built".
Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Member is referring to the rich built environment. Honourable Ronald Coleman, can you assist?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. It's to do with our buildings, Mr Speaker, like the Jamestown, which is a Georgian type of town, the enhancement of Jamestown, or even Ladder Hill Fort, Rupert's, together with the abolition of slavery, are we redeveloping this or redeveloping the wharf or even giving it a good clean up Mr Speaker for our tourist's and the people who enjoy it here.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member, Minister Brooks. Can you assist? Is that enough for you?

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development) –

I'll try Mr Speaker. So what my examples are, my Honourable friend alluded to was from redevelopment of the wharf to a clean-up which obviously is quite a difference when it comes to Funding.

The Speaker –

I agree.

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development) –

I would say of course, with all that we're trying to do, especially again with Minister Scipio's Portfolio, that when we reach our peak season and when there's tourist ships due to call, or a season that's already been established, that we do, towards putting in a plan so that attractions, our Island attractions is maintained and sort of cleaned up to be to looking as best as it possibly could, for a reasonable sum of money. And I say a reasonable sum of money, Mr Speaker, because we only have 500,000 in this ring fenced fund. Obviously, we do a lot of work from a recurring budget, again, under Minister Scipio's Portfolio in the environmental side of it to try and keep the Island tidy from, from debris and litter and so on. So, Mr Speaker, I did see a light on one of my colleagues.

The Speaker –

She will be called.

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development) –

The Chief Minister, so I don't think there's much more I can add on to this, only to say that, with some of the bigger built heritage, it will need substantial more investment than 500,000. And if we're looking to develop our sea front or increased accessibility for leisure tourists, marine leisure tourists, and experience around the seafront, and that is going to need a bigger investment. And that's something that we will be fighting for, through another capital funding program. But its bit too early to say but in the pipeline of projects going forward, that is still in the Vision, as it was identified some time ago by a number of consultants. So thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Thank you, Mr President, is it today?

The Speaker –

Speaker today.

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Mr Speaker. Okay, so I just wanted to support Minister Brooks on this, I think because I think from what the listening public will get gleaned from the session thus far, there's so much that we'd like to do for St Helena. And I think the 500k is now spent so. So I think it is just ensuring that we continue with the Vision, even to be able to commit to the Vision that we've set for the four years or indeed for us to achieve the right steps to take us forward to that Vision. It takes a lot of money. So even though we are grateful for the half a million that is ring fenced for tourism, we also need to be looking. It is obvious from the discussions today, looking at revenue generations, because of new money coming into the Island and new ideas coming to us, trying to spread the financial aid that we receive from the UK is becoming even more difficult if we take into consideration inflation, etc. So to support what Minister Brooks has said, half a million pounds is a lot, we would like to be able to look at what we can do to market our Island. Better to make sure that everybody buys into the branding for St Helena and Minister Brooks will know that the whole team is keen to get that piece of work out in the public domain because I think it will help to give some clarity to both people on St Helena, visitors, businesses, etc. Exactly what it is that St Helena stands for and the type of investment we're trying to attract, that in itself will hopefully generate some more

people coming to the Island, new business to the Island. And hopefully all of these wish lists, we can try and obviously, get some of them ticked off because I do understand that trying to maintain the buildings and of course, the infrastructure and even just doing a clean-up. It sounds easy until you start trying to put the pound sign alongside of that, and half a million pounds doesn't go very far. So I just think I wanted to rise to say there's a huge amount of work to be done in the next month or so, to ensure that the half a million pounds is used in a way that puts us on the right footing to go forward and it's not going to be able to solve all of our issues. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much for that. Minister Scipio, you wanted to assist with that?

The Hon. Christine Scipio (Minister for Environment, Natural Resources and Planning) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Yes, I just want to add some further information to what Minister Brooks has mentioned in respect of the built environment. As we know Mr Speaker that a pot of funding doesn't go very far. And we as a Government, and I talked about the entire 12 Legislative Council Members, we like to do a lot. And prior to election, the general election, you know, we thought we could do a lot. But of course, we rely heavily on the Her Majesty's Government in providing the funding, so we can't do everything that we wanted to do. This mention of the 500,000 pounds has been reinvented for this Financial Year. But once you, I wanted to say Mr Speaker is that, you know, the non-Government organisations on the Island does assist us with providing maintenance to our built environment and also other donors. And for instance, we just had some funding for Toby's Cottage, the Ladder. I do know that my Honourable friend Andrew Turner sits on the St Helena National Trust. He is on the board of that, and the St Helena National Trust as a non-Government organisation does play a huge role in our built environment. So I hope that Honourable Ronald Coleman could liaise with the Honourable Andrew Turner to get some information, as to say what that non-Government organisation is doing in enhancing our built environment. I also remember Mr Speaker that a historic environmental record was done many years ago, by the tourism many years ago. I'm talking Mr Speaker when I first became a Councillor, and I know that the St Helena National Trust has tried to pick up on that, because it was never endorsed by St Helena Government. And just for the benefit of our listeners, the historic environmental record, is a record of all our built, are all of our buildings on the Island that are listed one, two or three by the category. So I encourage my Honourable Ronald Coleman, to liaise with the Honourable Andrew Turner to have a better understanding what our non-Government organisations, St Helena National Trust is doing about our built environment. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. We are swaying a little bit too far from what I think is the original question, but Honourable Dr Corinda Essex you wanted to ask a question.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Can the Honourable Minister indicate whether the overseas funding Coordinator have managed to identify any potential sources of funding for protecting and enhancing our built environment?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development) –

I will try my best. I know the, sorry Mr Speaker I said it in that way because the Coordinator who has just, I knew that he was recently here and obviously just changed over from the Coordinator previously. But I know that the previous Coordinator was instrumental in setting up the Bicentenary trust, to look for streams of funding that could be allocated through a trust, to deliver on some of the key heritage and key infrastructures on the island. I'm not up to speed on the current Coordinator, but I know that he is working very closely with Kedell, our UK representative in London, in looking for different streams of funding. But I must admit, Mr Speaker, with the wide ranging topics under my Portfolio and all different sectors, I sometimes struggle to keep on top of knowing everything. And this is just one of those things that I haven't had a recent update on yet. But I thank the Honourable Member for bringing it to my attention, because I will now try and find out what progress has been made, since we've introduced this new funding Coordinator. So thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

And thank you very much. The question maybe exhausted unless Honourable Karl Thrower you have a point.

The Hon. Karl Thrower –

Thank you very much Mr Speaker, Just to ask the Honourable Minister if currently, we are carrying on doing survey work with tourists so that the tourists can help us identify which buildings to put our money into, which sites to put our money into. I know that when ESH was here, there was very significant questionnaires given to all the tourists, which received a lot of feedback from. Is that still an ongoing thing?

The Speaker –

Can you assist Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. My understanding yes, it is an ongoing thing but obviously the resources within the tourism sector, or which is now called a Visitor Information Centre has reduced quite dramatically from when ESH was carrying out all of these surveys. So my understanding is yes, the Tourism Manager does have regular dialogue with the accommodation providers, the tour operators, and so on to get a general feel of what the tourism sector is looking to, or looking at precisely and in what are the main attractions of the Island. Are they still the same as it was identified by ESH? A lot of them, obviously, we have seen as members of the community with our own eyes, things like the divers and stuff is still a huge attraction. So I don't think no sort of work needs to be done around identifying that is one of our key selling points, I think the work should, resources should be put on to how we can improve on that, on that sector within the product that we offer. I know the post-box walks was quite a big hit with tourism. And that is why we have allocated some funding within EDIP to maintain and protect those walks. And the Marketing Manager is always promoting the walks and the blue and green agendas that we have here. But I don't, you know, I don't have a spreadsheet that I can show my Honourable friend to say that yes, all of this has been monitored. But generally overall, I do get updates from the Marketing Manager to say, you know, what has a lot of hits, what sort of advertising lands a lot of results from, you know, from basically reviews and so on. And also from the 2 PR companies that we do, Brighter Group, they offer often feedback stats to our Marketing Manager on how well a specific advert did, or a little write up on the specific sector within tourism did. So it builds a

picture on what we need to develop on. But again, holistically going forward, I think, especially as we move into a new digital era I think, you know, the general public could play a big role in advertising the Island. The awareness of St Helena, you know, soon I hope to see that, you know, it will become really cheap to upload YouTube videos, and so on. So it's not just about targeting that specific pot of money to certain sectors, but it is marketing our Island generally, for what I call free promotion or free advertising. And so its work that we're doing also in different sectors to do with our cable and our digital transformation, that will also help increase the awareness of the Island as well. So I know it's kind of separate to tourism, Mr Speaker, but it all fits together. You know, our Vision should be a plan that from every sector all fits together and come together to form that objective is what we want. And that is obviously to increase the, you know, the visitor numbers to the Island and to improve the life for the general community on St Helena.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Honourable Member that question has been exhausted and we have about 20 minutes left and there's the next three questions to be asked, and of course responses. Next question please.

Question No 4 - The Honourable Robert Midwinter to ask the Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development:

The Speaker –

The Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker will the Honourable Minister for Treasury Infrastructure and Sustainable Development tell this Council what actions are SHG either undertaking or planning to undertake during the current financial year in order to attract increased numbers of cruise ship visits to the Island.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development?

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. So SHG on behalf of the Tourism Development, using that sector has formed from my understanding a working group that will look at how we deal with cruise ships. How do we improve on the experience of the cruise ship visitors, and so on? Now that working group, obviously, because a cruise ship arrives on St Helena, it does take a lot of moving parts to come together being able to produce a good experience for those visitors, but also, one of the most important things is that is a safe experience for those visitors as well. So there's no one department that has oversight of you know, safety, tourism, and sort of mobilisation of transport and also port management, obviously, because port control needs to be involved whenever there's a ship in the harbour as well. So the working group was set up so that you could have representation from each of those important sectors within Government. So there's a representation from the Police on there, obviously, because they would be in control of management of traffic and so on to a certain degree. There's obviously Health, from a health and safety point of view just need to be involved, they need to have a plan in place that you know, if there's an emergency of one of the passengers come ashore, they need to know how they're going to respond to it. Obviously, there needs to be authority on there from Port Control. And

obviously from our agent, Solomon's has been appointed as the agent to deal with the cruise ships. So I think that is the first step in dealing with how do we, you know, undertaken our plans because first we have to understand what we are capable of doing safely. And then how do we improve on that to make the experience more attractive for those visitors so that they will come time and time again.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. And I was actually, just before my next question, I'm looking at what are we doing from a marketing perspective in order to actually attract cruise ship operators. But in that respect, can the Minister say if the Sustainable Development team are liaising with counterparts or the other overseas, South Atlantic territories in order to ensure a joined up approach to attracting cruise ships and when I say attracting I'm talking about the marketing.

The Speaker –

Okay, thank you very much Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. And I'd like to thank my Honourable Member for his supplementary question. But my answer is I am not aware that our Marketing Manager is liaising with other Overseas Territories. I'm not aware of that, Mr Speaker, but I can undertake to find out if that is the current sort of direction that we are heading in.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Just a point of information. I have been advised that they were certainly doing so, certainly talking with colleagues in the Falklands. But Mr Speaker, bearing in mind that cruise passengers usually carry either dollars or euros, both of which are readily accepted in St Helena, can the Minister say what evidence there is to support the off putting statements made in the cruise ship arrivals, in the tourism recovery strategy that was launched yesterday, in particular the Islands limited ability to accept varied currencies?

The Speaker –

Minister Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development) –

Mr Speaker, I think what my friend was alluding to was a recent published Tourism Recovery Strategy that was only published yesterday. I think part of that strategy is to first of all identify the problem areas, the areas that we need to develop on. And so it's an honest document, it says what the situation is, and what we need to do about it. And trying to increase the accessibility of taking international payments on the Island is part of the priorities in going forward. The overall objective is to increase visitor spend. So first of all, we need to get them actually on the Island. And that is part of what the working group will do. And then it is for not just individual businesses, but also for Government, are having the right sort of

regulations and procedures in place that will allow you transactions to actually happen on Island with regards to international debit cards. And I know that some work is being done by the Financial Services Development Manager in setting up the right sort of regulatory regime and contacting the right sort of companies internationally that will be able to offer this service. So there is work being done on in the background in regards to that. But I'm afraid is that answering my Honourable Minister's question? Or is it something slightly different, a different area which he was looking to get information from?

The Speaker –

I see two red lights. I wasn't certain which one came up first, it was Robert Midwinter.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

If I may respond to the Honourable Minister, Mr Speaker, I was specifically I mean, the document released actually talks about acceptance of currencies. And we know that the cruise ship passengers bring euros and dollars, both of which we can accept. But another example of a similar ilk is that it refers to the limited roadway capacity in St Helena, this has never been a problem here in relation to cruise ships. And I would like to ask the evidence for this, because this document is in the public domain, and does not help them to market St Helena for cruise ship passengers.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much for that. Honourable Rosemary Bargo, you had your light on.

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

Thank you, Mr Speaker as we just touched on this Tourism Recovery Strategy Plan, may I ask if this is something that has to have a Vision of Ministers of the Council? Or is this something that can be just put out to the public from your Portfolio?

The Speaker –

Okay thank you very much. Minister Brooks, are you able to respond to that?

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development) –

I think she's asking the procedure and how this actually got published? Probably be more than answer. So yes, as you know, with this new Ministerial Government, each Minister is responsible for certain topics or certain aspects of the delivery of services of the entire Government. So one of those things that falls under my remit is the Tourism. Tourism, as I said, right from the beginning, is everybody's business, and I think it is cross cutting across Portfolios. So my Cabinet has been consulted on, understood a Tourism Recovery Strategy from a high level, looking at the nine objectives, what we want to achieve. But ultimately, you know, as the Minister for which this falls under it is my responsibility, and I will be accountable for this Strategy if there was scrutiny of it. The Strategy itself, I mean, it kind of delivers or focuses on three main areas, which is product development, marketing and capacity, because that's what we feel will increase our availability to the outside world. And under those three key areas, there is nine objectives. So one of them is to improve St Helena's visitor experience, and increase average spend. Now, I don't think anyone in here would object against that. So, you know, although I feel that, yes, this is my responsibility, I felt that what I've put through here, is shared by the entire Council, if I'll be honest, we could run through the nine objectives, you know, deliver, develop and definitely diversify the tourism product. Now, of course, we want to increase the product that we're spending, that the product that we're offering, on St Helena, how we go about doing that is the implementation plan, and that plan hasn't been

finalised yet or agreed on. But the high level strategy is there. And I think it is one that all Members will agree with, we need to increase our accommodation capacity. Of course we do, if we bring in more visitors, then we need places for those visitors to stay. So that is another one of the objectives, increased destination awareness through targeting marketing campaigns. As you know, an example of that was recently when we did a marketing campaign around Jonathan's birthday. So that was a targeted area that we wanted to focus on. And the reach from that was excellent, was huge. Another area is to reengage development in key markets by increasing the number of tour operators selling St Helena. So also, Mr Speaker, we are looking to, not for just for us or our marketing team, or community, to sell the Island but also those people what is in the business of sending their customers on holidays, also to sell our Island. So we want to focus on that. And we also want to develop our skills of our workforce and hospitality sector so that our visitors have a good experience when they staying on the Island, and they all leave with, you know, satisfactory that they had a pleasant time here. We also looking ahead now, Mr Speaker, we want to establish a Tourism Board to represent this sector, because Government shouldn't be the one that is delivering on our tourism. In our tourism plans, I always felt that this should be delivered by the private sector, but because we're just out of COVID the environment is not right for that yet. So I think we need to develop one, our visitor numbers, which will increase the viability of the private sector successfully running a tourism industry on the Island. And we also need to develop the tourism to attract models, have a model for diversifying our tourism product to that private sector so you don't want to hand over. Like you put it in these words, a car that is off the road, you want to hand over a car that is running correctly. So you know, we don't want to give the private sector, we want to give the private sector the best opportunity to make a success. And so we do need to be at a certain point of recovery and seeing growth within our industry. Before we diversify that service.

The Speaker –

Honourable Member I was going to ask you if that's the end of your nine objectives that you've been going through. I know you've asked a question, and obviously you had to respond to it. But I've seen two red lights up. We only have five minutes left, there is two or more questions to ask. So if you would bear that in mind, I would imagine if any questions are left over, we can push them over to the next Question Time. But if you can get it all done today, obviously we want to do that. Dr Corinda Essex following that Rosemary Bargo.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, can the Honourable Minister please explain why, if not only just as a matter of courtesy, the strategy was not shared with all Elected Members before it was publicised.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, the strategy was touched on and obviously there will be questions asked about that Honourable Minister Brooks.

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development) –

It wasn't a conscious decision not to share it Mr Speaker, it was just that the Strategy is a high level document and it just sets out how we would recover from our tourism. Again, the important part of that is how we implement that Strategy. And I do feel that the biggest role that Elected Members could play is in helping to implement that Strategy. Like I said before, Mr Speaker, I don't think from my high level perspective, that there's anything wrong with the Strategy or anything should be different with the

Strategy. I agree with it. And that's why I approved it. The work comes when you start to implement the strategy.

The Speaker –

Okay, thank you very much. Honourable Rosemary Bargo. And then Honourable Robert Midwinter. And if we have time, Honourable Dr Corinda Essex. Honourable Rosemary Bargo.

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I think my Honourable friend Dr Essex asked, I was gonna interject and said to ask the question of, were everyone privy to this document?

The Speaker –

Okay thank you very much, Robert Midwinter.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, noting that our Honourable Minister mentioned in his very first response about this being such a cross cutting item. Can I just ask, did he have this endorsed by the whole of his Cabinet before it was released into the public domain?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. It is relevant. Honourable Mark Brooks.

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development) –

So I don't want to confuse a distortion and being endorsed by Cabinet. If it's endorsed by Cabinet, then I would suggest the Cabinet is responsible. Overall responsibility is for the whole of the document. I want to try and clear the lines between what is the responsibility of the Minister, but obviously, with the support of his Cabinet, is there's two different things there. There are some things which Cabinet makes decision on and we collectively give our view and there's some things that the Minister gives his decision on, with the approved, not the approval, but with the appraisal and the, what's the word? I said the expectation that the Ministers know of what the plan says but it is the Minister their self who would be overall accountable for delivery of them. As I said, I do not anticipate starting this journey on my own, or is a single Minister, this is something that we will work on together, going forward. But, you know, we only have a short time four years will fly around. And we need to start getting some work on the ground before our time ends here. And if we always go around the circle debating on whether this is the correct strategy or not, then we might find ourselves back in a Committee system again, Mr Speaker, so I think we need to recognise that part of this objective of a Ministerial System was to speed up some of the decisions that was being made. Now I've made a decision to implement a tourism recovery strategy. But the work begins when we start to implement that, how we deliver on that, and what we learn from in delivering that strategy. And that's where everyone plays a role in. But I'm afraid, Mr Speaker, I might not be sort of the approval of the non-Elected or the Non Ministers to be able to operate this way. But, you know, there's where scrutiny comes in. It's their job to scrutinise Ministers Strategy. So I believe that the process for my understanding is followed in a way where the public would expect.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Member I will allow 2 further questions and then we are out of time. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex, and then the Chief Minister.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

With the greatest respect to the Honourable Minister, does he not see that there is a need to get buy in and support from his colleagues for a cross cutting document of national importance, such as this Strategy and that he knows and accept that if that buy in is not obtained at an early stage, and we all know that the devil is in the detail, it is far less likely that the document is going to be able to be implemented smoothly, and in the best way to benefit the Island of St Helena, Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Can I ask the Honourable Chief Minister she will respond?

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) -

So it's a bit difficult because I can't really respond to what the Honourable Dr Corinda Essex said. I just think, just to wrap this all up and put a bow on it, I think what we're trying to say is, it would have been great for the document to have been shared before publicised, because we have had other documents that's come through that has been scrutinised, if I can say it like that by Legislative Council. And it does help to ensure that the wording is correct, because I think what Councillor Robert Midwinter is also saying is it's the way in which certain sections of that document comes across could incorrectly market St Helena in saying that, instead of being open and considering our parameters that we can operate within, it is saying that we are not open for business. And I think that is I'm hoping I've got that right Councillor Midwinter. So I just think we will learn from that experience and ensure that going forward, a cross cutting document like this is shared with Ministers, but also with all Elected Members. So the document when it goes out has the full endorsement if I can say that, well understanding of the full Council.

4. CLOSING REMARKS BY THE SPEAKER

The Speaker –

Thank you very much honourable Chief Minister. You said you managed to wrap it up and put a bow on it. And I think you have already done that. That brings us to the end of the Minister's Question Time for today Honourable Members, there were to have two questions that weren't able to be asked because we ran out of time. That then does conclude the proceedings off Minister's Question Time for today. Thank you one and all for you're very valuable contributions. I wish you a productive day ahead. Thank you all very much.

Honourable Speaker

Date