



St Helena
Government

ST HELENA GOVERNMENT
PROCEEDINGS OF MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME
TUESDAY, 30 JULY 2024
THIRTEENTH SITTING

ST. HELENA
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

THE SPEAKER

The Honourable Cyril Keith Gunnell

EX-OFFICIO MEMBER

The Honourable Attorney General, Mr David Ferguson Ballantyne

ELECTED MEMBERS

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 Elizabeth Knipe
The Honourable Robert Charles Midwinter
The Honourable Christine Lilian Scipio
The Honourable Julie Dorne Thomas
The Honourable Karl Gavin Thrower
The Honourable Andrew James Turner

OVERSEAS

The Honourable Gillian Brooks

Legislative Council Office Assistant

Miss Morgan Thomas-Henry

PROCEEDINGS OF MINISTERS QUESTION TIME

Tuesday, 30th July, 2024

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

Honourable Members, welcome and a very good morning to you and to all others present in the Council Chamber on this the 30th day of July, 2024. The welcoming and good morning wishes are also extended to all those who may be listening, have tuned their radios to SAMS Radio One to listen to the live broadcast of the proceedings of Ministers Question Time held today in this Honourable House. The focus for Ministers Question Time at this session is Effective and Enabling Infrastructure. In accordance with Order 9, Rule 3 of the Standing Orders of the Legislative Council, Effective and Enabling Infrastructure is the topic that Councillors have chosen for this meeting in accordance with our Standing Orders. Also the Chief Minister was made aware of the topic chosen ahead of this meeting, and an hour before Ministers Question Time commencing, the questions submitted by Councillors were forwarded to Ministers. Established practice has it that the Order Paper would be published on the SHG website on the morning of Minister's Question Time. Only five Councillors are present at this morning's meeting, this is because one inductive Member resigned from Council, and she will hopefully be replaced at a Poll in August, and the Honourable Gillian Brooks is abroad on personal business. Minister Martin Henry should be arriving later. There are five questions on the Order Paper, as is usual, to have been listed in alphabetical order to be selected randomly for response. All of the questions are directed to the Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs, because infrastructure falls within that Minister's Portfolio. Honourable Members and members of the public are aware that Standing Orders were amended in respect of the number of supplementary questions that Councillors may ask, the amendment makes it possible for other Ministers to give support answering questions once the Minister to whom the question has been put has acknowledged the original question. For those wanting to catch the Speaker's eye, we operate a system whereby a red light is switched on to indicate that a Member wishes to speak, unless you are rising on a point of order or information, please don't draw the Speaker's attention when someone else is speaking. That would interrupt that person, which is an infringement of rule 15. The timekeeper and Clerk for this meeting is Miss Morgan Thomas-Henry. First question, please.

3.

QUESTIONS

Mr Speaker –

The Honourable Ronald Coleman. Minister Ellick, do you wish to speak?

Hon. Jeffery Ellick –

Mr Speaker just a point of information please.

Mr Speaker –

Don't keep pulling the thing towards you. I've been told it could break. It should be okay just to speak as it is.

Hon. Jeffery Ellick -

Thank you Mr. Speaker, just on the point of information Mr. Speaker. I note that all of these questions are actually directed to me, but infrastructure does not come under me. Mr. Speaker it is mainly the maintenance of buildings that comes under me and the roads infrastructure that come under me, but all the questions that I see in the Order Paper is actually about the EDIP program, and the EDIP program does not come under me, it comes under Minister Brooks, however, Mr. Speaker, I will endeavour to answer the questions as best as I can, and if I need assistance from my colleagues, I will ask for assistance from my colleagues in relation to this matter. But just going forward, there's nothing wrong having that chat with me concerning about infrastructure and then I can direct to the appropriate people.

Mr Speaker –

Yes, once you have acknowledged the question, then your colleagues can help you out, if that needs to be the case, I thank you for informing us of what you have just done. Thank you very much. The Honourable Ronald Coleman.

Question No. 1 - The Honourable Ronald Coleman to ask the Honourable Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs

Hon. Ronald Coleman –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs tell this Council what progress has been made for the provision of a project to provide maintenance and improvements to our road networks?

Mr Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs.

Hon. Jeffery Ellick –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank my Honourable colleague for his question. Just to say, in respect of the roads network, as I've mentioned in previous formal LegCo, there has been I think, 6 million that we approved within the EDIP pipeline projects in terms of the road network. However, Mr. Speaker, again, we've given approval for that. The EDIP comes under Minister Brooks. However, what I will say is that we've been trying to be very proactive around this area. So what I have done is asked my team to submit a business case to see if we can bring the money forward and start utilising the money. As Members will know we have a slurry machine. It needs certain amount of materials to be fed into it. It is being underused at this moment in time, so we are putting a business case forward, which I've discussed with my Minister Brooks, whether that will be successful or not I don't know because it has to go

through the EDIP process, but that's what we are doing from my side Mr. Speaker, unless I can ask if my Friend has anything further.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much, Minister and thank you for being proactive. Minister Brooks, did you want to make any point at this time or no? Thank you very much. Next question, please. Dr Essex.

Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Can the Honourable Minister indicate whether EDIP funding will, in fact, cover maintenance?

Mr Speaker –

Honourable Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs.

Hon Jeffery Ellick –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I thank my Honourable Friend for her question. In terms of maintenance theoretically a maintenance budget that we have, the purpose of the project money is to develop the road. So when we look on our surfacing and infrastructure of the roads, there's the core infrastructure means actually excavating certain parts of the road. So we have things like the sub base and everything else in place to ensure that we got sound roads. But there are sound roads on the island in place, we just probably need to do the surfacing, and that's where the slurry machine comes in, in terms of the resurfacing of the road. So all that will be part of the project.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Dr Corinda Essex, Councillor Essex.

Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Can the Honourable Minister clarify exactly what the content of the EDIP project will involve, because you're referring again to maintenance and improvement being part of the project? Thank you.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much, Minister?

Hon. Jeffery Ellick –

Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Like I said before Mr. Speaker, I don't deal with the EDIP project. Business Case was put forward some time ago for the six million. What I will say we might not have that six million because of other projects. If other projects eats into the money, then be less for that amount of money, but I'll probably hand over to my Honourable Friend Minister Brooks, who'll be able to probably explain about that side of it.

Mr Speaker –

Honourable Minister Brooks.

Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the long and short of my Honourable Friend's question is, as yet we just don't know. We've approved those as Minister Ellick said in the EDIP pipeline, some funding for road projects, but no justification business cases has come to the EDIP Board as of yet, so we'd have no idea what is included in that. So I can't really go into any more detail than has already been given today.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Councillor Essex?

Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

I thank the Honourable Ministers for their responses. Can they please indicate an indicative timeframe by which the necessary information will be submitted?

Mr Speaker –

Ministers?

Hon. Jeffery Ellick –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I thank my Honourable Friend for her question. We can't give indicative times on anything that is yet. You've got the EDIP project going on. There are other projects in play. I don't know when those projects are going to be finished. All I've said previously is that I'm submitting, I'll get my staff to submit a business case to EDIP, whether EDIP will approve it or not I don't know if they will. So we've just started there, and that's going to take a bit of time because we've got to look at other priorities as well. I only have one officer who'll be able to deal with the business cases surrounding it, but I've got the officer dealing with a whole load of more issues at the moment, so well what I will know, what I did say to, I need it done ASAP, and hopefully before the end of this year will be done.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you, Minister. Councillor Midwinter?

Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker can either of the Ministers say to what extent it is their intention to include either district or community roads within the proposed project, or if this is just for the main roads network?

Mr Speaker –

Thank you. Ministers.

Hon. Jeffery Ellick –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, all I can say to my Hon Friend, in relation to this year, we don't know about how much it's going to be or whatever at this moment in time, but the main thing is we have to look at the main roads, the primary roads, and the secondary roads, starting off. If there's more money, then it all depends if sufficient money is there, then we will deal with it, but the priority has to be the primary and secondary roads at this time. Thank you. If there's more money outside of that, and its approval from EDIP then we'll go from there.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Councillor Thrower.

Hon. Karl Thrower –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would the Honourable Minister just be able to clarify that there is still an ongoing road maintenance project, you know, to do urgent repairs for like the ones carried out on Constitution recently and things like that, that we are not now just waiting for the EDIP funding, and we're letting our roads degrade until to that stage.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Jeffery Ellick –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. No, we have a maintenance budget. And as you will know, I think it's like every month or so, the Roads Inspector will send a report round to everyone. So they didn't know that what roads they are focusing on in terms of priority. And I did mention, I did put

this well you will ask for at one Minister's Question Time, and I also did it on In Scope program as well. It's the priorities of the roads, but we do have, just to answer your question, we do have a maintenance budget.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Next question, please.

Question No. 2 - The Honourable Karl Thrower to ask the Honourable Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs

Mr Speaker –

The Honourable Karl Thrower.

Hon. Karl Thrower –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister tell this Council what specific infrastructure improvements are planned to accommodate the changes in traffic patterns due to the new port facility and to mitigate any potential increase to congestion in Jamestown, especially on Napoleon Street in the surrounding area?

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. By Minister, I assume you mean Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs. Minister?

Hon. Jeffery Ellick –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said before, this is one of the conditions that the applicant had to discharge, and that's the EDIP team had to discharge these. So again, this is, Minister Brooks, however, what I will do is tell you what has been done so far in respect of this year. From what I understand is that a traffic management plan has been developed, and the officers are working on that, and then they will take it towards the Chief Planning Officer for approval at some stage. I can't tell you anything more than that, because I'm not really involved with the other side of it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Council Thrower?

Hon Karl Thrower –

Thank you. Can I ask if that project will then be tied in with broader projects such as the parking issues in Jamestown and things like that, which are outside of the scope of the original planning application?

Mr Speaker –

Minister?

Hon. Jeffery Ellick –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I haven't seen the plan or anything else, like I said, so I can't really comment on that specific plan. What I know is that in terms of the parking issues, and there is work being carried out at the moment by the Police and they have been to my Advisory Board in respect of some traffic management in terms of signage and so forth, as well as we also work with penalty notices, which will assist. As I understand it with this traffic management plan is a better future traffic management on St. Helena.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much Minister, thank you. No further questions. Next question please.

Question No. 3 - The Honourable Andrew Turner to ask the Honourable Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs

Mr Speaker –

The Honourable Andrew Turner.

Hon. Andrew Turner –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Honourable Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs, tell this House what steps the St. Helena Government is taking to develop a fibre to home network following the cessation of the commercial arrangement between the Government and Maestro St Helena limited?

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister.

Hon. Jeffery Ellick –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, is the matter for my portfolio? No, we don't deal with this particular area, but I'll call on you ask Minister Brooks, if you could assist in this area.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you. Minister Brooks.

Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, yes. I'll try to assist my colleague in our answering this question, yes. So after the yes, the project didn't come to fruition between SHG and Maestro, we sort of dropped hands and went our separate ways, so to speak. We are now looking at developing a new Communications Ordinance. We have a Communications and Network Strategy in place, which has been agreed by the previous Executive Council, and now this Executive Council that will inform the drafting of the Communication Ordinance, as we know that we did approve an Ordinance in this House, but it was never enacted. And then, because of inconsistency through legal advice or technical advice, we were told that the Ordinance that we did approve back in 2022 wasn't fit for purpose, so the legal teams wanted us to relook at that Ordinance, and with the help of a technical expert, we are now drafting, or in the midst of drafting, a complete new Ordinance which still has to come to this House to be enacted and then hopefully approved by the Governor, sorry, approved and then enacted by the Governor. Following that, would dictate how the regulations should be set up, and the regulations will include a regulator, and the regulator will then obviously monitor and regulate whoever is the ISP going forward. But until that time, that those soft infrastructure works are in place, we don't have a way forward in terms of actually delivering the fibre to the home, although I will say our remit was always fibre speeds to the home, not necessarily cable being directly to the home, because we have to move, obviously nobody said this time so we will move for technology and in essence of extra work and damage to environmental and all the rest of it, you know, why dig up the streets when you can beam in the signal. So we are very flexible in how we deliver this project, but we will stand by the commitment we make that we will have fibre optic speeds to the home. But I don't think I can go on any further to talk about this project, not until those various works are done. Mr. Speaker, so I think that's where we stand with the project, but it's just a shame that it didn't go as we intended with building our own network through the Maestro contract, and that was funded partly from EDIP, and as my Honourable Minister said, that you know some of the projects in EDIP is currently running over the cost that it was estimated. So we do have concerns there, plus as I said it was only part funded. Some of it was coming from our Consolidated Fund and we all know the pressures that our Consolidated Fund is under, and the

commitments we all have to use, we're going to have to take going forward, which will mean that we will probably be depleting our Consolidated Fund if we don't find other means of funding. So with all that said, we have to sort of pause and just reflect on what is our advantage going forward, and what access to funding we have in means of delivering this fibre optic cable project.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Councillor Turner.

Hon. Andrew Turner –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I want to welcome that commitment to fibre speeds to the home. I think that's a very important one, but there are a few sort of follow up questions based on the Minister's response there. The first one is, you mentioned that there had been advice on the 2022 Ordinance that was passed in this House to say that it was not fit for purpose. Where had that advice come from?

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Minister Brooks.

Hon. Mark Brooks –

It came from the AG Chambers.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you Minister. Councillor Turner.

Hon. Andrew Turner

A further point of clarity, you mentioned that there was sort of other pressures on the EDIP budget, and there had been a certain amount earmarked to come out of the Consolidated Fund, which, of course, has its own list of pressures coming up. So is that money still earmarked, or is that now going to be divided amongst other priorities?

Mr Speaker –

Minister Brooks?

Hon. Mark Brooks –

At this time, Ministers haven't made a decision on that, so I can't say for sure whether that money will still be earmarked for the project.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister –

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I do want to reassure the Member, though that getting this work done is on a timeline and is a priority due to be completed before the tenure of this Council. Because we understand obviously at the moment, we all know that our current communications provider, their license is due to expire. So we understand, we don't wish to be in a position where we have to extend on the current licensing. We would like to get the regulatory framework in place so that we can have a more robust communications network licensing going forward.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Councillor Turner?

Hon. Andrew Turner –

Thank you there to the Chief Minister who saved me one of my follow up questions, just one final one from me then, is the overall strategic intention still to create an infrastructure that's owned by SHG so that we're not held to ransom by a telecoms provider over their infrastructure?

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Minister Brooks.

Hon. Mark Brooks –

I think again, I think Ministers haven't made a final decision on this, but we are clear that we want to have control over the network, that might be in, own all of it or might be through, a sort of regulated type of arrangement, but it was quite clear from us coming into government and understanding the arrangement or the agreement or the license with the current ISP, that we wanted to change that approach going forward, because from my personal view, it was heavily in the ISP sort of interest and not the St Helena Government.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Councillor Thrower, please.

Hon. Karl Thrower –

Thank you very much. Can the Minister confirm whether the 450,000 pounds worth of equipment currently stored at Bradley's, which was bought based on the provision of the Maestro, designed network will now be utilised, or it won't be utilised?

Mr Speaker –

Minister Brooks?

Hon. Mark Brooks –

I'm not too sure on the figure that my Honourable Friend said, but there is quite a few 1000 pounds worth of equipment sitting up, right, at least that was bought for the Maestro contract, and yes that equipment can be utilised in delivering a fibre network around the island.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Councillor Thrower.

Hon. Karl Thrower –

So just to confirm the figure is approximate, I think it was actually something around 452,000. I'm happy to supply the exact figures to the Minister, including about 70,000 pounds worth of tools, which was ordered by SHG. There's also the question of the 100,000 pound pay out to Maestro on March 7th of this year, on the completion of negotiations with them over the failure of that project. So my question is very simple, there's no network being designed, we've got 450,000 pounds worth of equipment, how do you know that that equipment can be used in a network if you haven't designed the network?

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Minister Brooks.

Hon. Mark Brooks –

Because Mr. Speaker, I believe that the majority of the equipment is the actual cable, and actual cable wouldn't change depending on what network design you approve in the end.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Councillor Thrower.

Hon. Karl Thrower –

Thank you very much. I will just say the question is, very simply, have they, have you thought about the warranties on all that equipment, which is now over a year old, so a lot of it will be out of warranty when you start fitting it?

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Minister Brooks.

Hon. Mark Brooks –

I don't have the information on what warranty we had with that equipment, so it will be unfair for me to answer that question. I'll leave it there Mr. Speaker.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I just want to rise to say that no payment of 100,000 was made to Maestro. I just want to make sure that that doesn't go into the public domain, and just to add on to that, that that is why this whole fibre to the home network and all the works and response in respect of how we go forward with our communications, remains a priority for this Government, because we really need the regulatory framework in place that will help to inform us whether we do need an owned network, or whether the regulations will be strong enough to be able to put the robustness together to ensure that SHG has more control over the network, or the communications now about going forward.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chief Minister. Councillor Essex?

Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the sake of clarity, can the Chief Minister or one of the Ministers please state clearly, what are the next steps to address these issues?

Mr Speaker –

Thank you. Ministers.

Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

In order, if possible, please.

Mr Speaker –

Ministers, what are the next steps?

Hon. Chief Minister –

I thought Minister Brooks did that quite clearly before whereby he talked about the work that's going on now to, obviously, he's already said that what was passed in the House in 2022 was deemed unfit for purpose. So we've now done a review of that that is now reaching completion. We understand by March, I think it is of next year, that the Ordinance etc., needs to be done so that we can ensure that the regulatory framework is in place by July of next year. Is that correct Mr. Brooks? I just want to make sure that the dates are right, but we are pushing hard to ensure that this is done, noting the timelines on the existing license with the ISP but Minister Brooks, if you want to clarify again, I by all means will let you do so.

Mr Speaker –

Minister Brooks, can you assist?

Hon. Mark Brooks –

I think probably for the benefit of the public, just to reassure that the current ISPs license concludes in December 25 and we will endeavour to have all the regulatory frameworks, the regulator, the Ordinance, all of that approved and sort of implemented before the end of that date.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Next question, please.

Question No. 4 - The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex to ask the Honourable Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs

Mr Speaker –

The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex.

Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs, please state what level of priority St Helena Government attaches to construction of a new prison and explain why works have not yet commenced?

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs.

Hon. Jeffery Ellick –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, this is in EDIP Mr. Speaker, but I'll try not to as best I can. In terms of priority, it is a top priority for this government. As people will know, the current prison isn't human rights compliant, and we really need to push on with this issue. The fact that it's not compliant also means that people have reduced sentences to take into account the condition of the prison, which isn't helpful in terms of justice. But what I can say, plans for a new prison are under development. It is anticipated that the design and supervisor contract will be issued shortly, and is currently at the Attorney General's Chambers. Once this comes from the Attorney General's Chambers, the invitation to tender will go out to the public. Mr. Speaker, based on the last information I heard from the one of the project managers, it is estimated that completion of the prison should be 2028 however, I'm still not happy with that sort of date. We should be doing as much as we can and as close as we can, in order to get that prison completed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much Minister. Councillor Essex?

Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Can the Honourable Minister please indicate how long the contract documentation has been with the Attorney General's Chambers?

Mr Speaker –

Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Jeffery Ellick –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would say about a week ago, it's been two weeks, sorry, it's been with the Attorney General's Chambers. Far as I saw from one email shortly before it should be going over, it we just need a final word from the AG's office for the approval.

Mr Speaker –

Dr Essex, pardon Councillor Essex, thank you.

Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the relevant Minister please indicate why it took so long to draw up the documentation before it was submitted to the Attorney General's Chambers, because this project has been on the books for ages?

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Ministers. Minister Brooks.

Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll try to answer Dr Essex questions. There has been a failed round that was unsuccessful. When the Prison Project was put together, it was put together for a tender exercise to go out for a design and build, and the tender exercise failed. And as my Honourable Friend know, in this room, when it fails, you have to go through all the procedures again. You have to develop new specs and get Board approval. We did change the specs of the tender exercise to design and supervise instead of design and build. So, yes, I think the delays has just been that there was a failed round. We had to go back through all the procedures again, of course, obviously we rely heavy on AG's Chambers in developing these tender exercises, and we all know the constraints that the AGs Chambers continues to be under. So that's probably some explanation as to why it hasn't developed as quickly as we would like.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you Minister Brooks. Next question, please.

Question No. 5 - The Honourable Robert Midwinter to ask the Honourable Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs

Mr Speaker –

The Honourable Robert Midwinter.

Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Honourable Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs tell this Council what consideration has been given to ensuring that persons with disabilities will be able to fully access all of the amenities being developed within the Rupert's port area? And Mr. Speaker, I meant to declare an interest there as a Member of the SHAPE Board of Directors.

Mr Speaker –

Noted. Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs.

Hon. Jeffery Ellick –

Thank you Mr. Speaker, I thank my Honourable Friend for his question. Again, in respect of this, this is an EDIP project. I have no dealings with that however, this was brought to the Government, and the Honourable Chief Minister, will probably elaborate for me on that later on, in terms of the disabilities and idea. I think that's all part of the Building Regulations in any case. But we did also approve further monies to allow for a lift within one of the buildings outside of that. I'll have to ask my Honourable Friends if they can assist me in terms of this year like I said, as a government, collectively we did approve further monies and changes in respect of the Ruperts development. But as for the details and so forth, I don't sit on any Boards or anything relating to Ruperts. In respect of Ruperts and all the development in terms of port and roads, I will only become responsible and accountable once EDIP hands it over to my Portfolio.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister Brooks.

Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and from sitting on various EDIP Boards including the Ruperts Project and R2, I can confirm that the Ruperts port facilities will be fully compliant to disabled requirements.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I think it is important, because I know that the change now to the development application. We had an open session last Tuesday in which we discussed the development application for the PCB, and I can never remember the names of the CFS. Anyway, now it will be used as a more permanent building for staff and from doing those amendments, what it had already been approved to have disabled access to it, but it was never really taken forward and there was concern raised by this government as to how that had been allowed to continue. Thankfully now, because of the amendments, it does make the whole of the Ruperts Port area disabled friendly. So I am hoping that will be music to the Honourable Robert Midwinter's ears.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Councillor Midwinter.

Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and indeed it is because, Mr. Speaker, and as the Chief Minister has said, I did note that it wasn't previously fully compliant in that respect in the previous designs, but now the ones that have recently been considered by ExCo have actually met that. So, Mr. Speaker, probably better to direct this to the Chief Minister, within the Vision and Strategy it states that effective infrastructure means that we live in well designed, sustainable places where we can all access the amenities and services we need, and note my emphasis on 'all' there Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister confirm that it is a matter of SHG policy to include disabled access and facilities within all new buildings?

Mr Speakers –

Thank you very much. Honourable Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we all know the restrictions that we have on St Helena because there's a lot of older buildings, and obviously making them all disabled friendly is not always the easiest thing. But I know you've mentioned all new buildings, so obviously, as part of the planning, I know Minister Scipio who is responsible for planning, is very keen that all new buildings will be disabled friendly.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Councillor Midwinter.

Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and it's again, good to hear that noting that the port buildings did not previously contain certain amenities, can the Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs

confirm that disabled access and amenities have been included in the designs for the new prison?

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister Ellick.

Hon. Jeffery Ellick –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, yes, my understanding is that they are in there. Like I said, I don't actually be involved with any of this. My Honourable Friend Minister Brooks, he sits on all the Boards and everything else, I don't get all those, all that information, but like I said, we did approve that as a collaborative. Thank you.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Councillor Midwinter.

Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Mr. Speaker, again, I'd like to thank the Honourable Minister for his response, and because he said he understands that they have been, it would be good if we can have confirmation outside of this session, noting that it wasn't included originally in the port building, that that has actually been included. Thank you.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister Ellick, can you give confirmation?

Hon. Jeffery Ellick –

So, Mr. Speaker, like I said before, I will not be accountable or responsible for those buildings until buildings are completed and then commissioned and then handed over to myself, before Minister Brooks will probably be able to give you confirmation regarding myself. Thank you.

Mr Speaker –

Can the Minister that will be accountable? Response? Please?

Hon. Mark Brooks –

Yes, I can give assurance that once we have the final detailed plans of the prison, that we will make sure it is inclusive for disability.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Chief Minister?

Hon. Chief Minister –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just think I need clarity around these buildings within the port, because there are some people who are frowning in the room, and I can tell you that the disabled access for these buildings, it was in the original, but it wasn't strategically costed, and there was no cost for the lifts, etc. So now, because of the changes that has been made by this government, the costing and the layout allows for disabled access for the ground floor and the first floor.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much for explaining that.

Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Mr. Speaker, if I may rise on a point of information there, because the plans that I saw certainly did not include disabled toilets on the first floor of the building, only on the ground floor, which then meant that the building would only have accommodated visitors to the building and not people working in the building, which is the point that I'm trying to make here. Mr. Speaker.

We have a policy within, certainly the government that we will, do not discriminate on basis of disability. However, if we do not include facilities for disabled people to be able to work in those buildings, we are discriminating. Thank you. Mr. Speaker,

Mr Speaker –

Understood. Thank you very much. Honourable Minister Brooks?

Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to assure, reassure my Honourable Friend that, having seen new plans, that there is facilities on the first and ground floor of the both facilities for disabled people. Thank you.

Mr Speaker –

Okay. Thank you very much. If there are no further supplementary questions Members that then concludes, oh, I do beg your pardon. Councillor Thrower?

Hon. Karl Thrower –

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to rise on a piece of information. I've now found the document that has the cost that I referred to earlier. So this is a document that was forwarded by Maestro to me. It says, cable fibre optic for main spine distribution network, OLT active equipment, 403,496 pounds, tools and installation equipment purchased 70,437 pounds, Poles, 34,800 pounds. So I just wanted to clarify that is the document that was forwarded by Maestro, and that is the equipment that should be up at Bradley's. Thank you.

Mr Speaker –

So that document was forwarded to whom?

Hon. Karl Thrower –

It was brought to myself for presentation to the PAC, which has been done by Maestro. I met with Maestro. Just for clarity, I met with Maestro when I was at the Westminster Seminar in the UK, which is where all the information came. I've also got copies of several of these documents. Yeah.

Mr Speaker –

I don't know whether you want to take any of that into consideration Honourable Ministers, Honourable Chief Minister?

Hon. Chief Minister –

All I'll say is, we haven't sighted this documentation, neither, am I we're going to make a comment about it. We've obviously parted ways with Maestro at this present time, and I don't really understand at this time, I wouldn't want to make a comment on it, if I can put it that way. We are, I think Minister Brooks made it very clear that where we can utilise the investment already made in taking the communications network forward, we will. It is unfortunate, as Minister Brooks said, that it had to come to this, but that's been done now, and we need to utilise as much as we can of the investment when we know the way forward for our communications networks, in the best interest of St Helena.

Mr Speaker –

Okay. Thank you very much. Honourable Minister Brooks.

Hon. Mark Brooks –

Just to say, Mr. Speaker, I am in possession of inventory lists of all the equipment at Bradley's. I don't know, I don't have the list in front of me, so I can't compare it to the list that my Honourable Friend just read out. But we know what's out there. So regardless what information

you have received from Maestro, we've been, actually officers been out there and physically counted every item out there and listed on an inventory list for this Government. Thank you.

Mr Speaker –

Okay, thank you very much. Councillor Thrower.

Hon. Karl Thrower –

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the point of interest really, I think the problem with this is, in light of what Minister says, as a former network engineer who used to specialise in large scale network design, you never purchase stuff before you've designed a network, the question really isn't about whether screw A and screw B's on site. The question is, why did we spend so much money on systems that has never been designed? You wouldn't order a car before you know how many people you need to transport, and that's exactly what you've done with nearly 500,000 pounds of the government's money.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. I think we might just leave it there and go no further forward other than, Honourable Chief Minister, did you want to make a comment?

Hon. Chief Minister –

No. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for making that suggestion, because I think we were literally getting into something at the moment that has nothing to do with the topic of today, is specific now to a dare I say failed project at that time, and we, as I said before, we will try and utilise everything that was invested to take the network forward. So, and I, we are not technical experts here as Ministers, and we haven't been given, the concern hasn't been raised that the investment is wasted.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Councillor Essex, I'll allow you one question.

Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Not a question Mr Speaker, I'd like to rise on a point of information.

Mr Speaker –

Please do.

Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

The Honourable Karl Thrower indicated that the information that he was quoting had been shared with PAC. As a member of PAC I would like to inform this House and listening public that that has not yet reached PAC. It may have been given to the Chair, but it has not reached PAC as a whole. Thank you.

Mr Speaker

All right, Thank you very much for that. I think we will leave it there. That then concludes Minister's Question Time Meeting for July. Thank you very much for your very valuable contributions. Thank you also to those in the public who took opportunity to listen to the live proceedings. We hope that you found the questions by Councillors and answers provided by Ministers, relating to Effective and Enabling Infrastructure, both interesting and informative. Hopefully, some of the questions you wanted answers to were among those details, and you are now better informed. We look forward very much to your feedback. In closing, I would like to thank SAMS for broadcasting the proceedings live. All being well, they will be rebroadcast. I wish you all a very pleasant day ahead. Thank you all very much.



Honourable Deputy Speaker

