

**REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF
HOUSE OF KEYS
Douglas, Tuesday, 9th December 1997
at 10.00 a.m.**

Present:

The Speaker (the Hon N Q Cringle) (Rushen); Mr L I Singer and Hon A R Bell (Ramsey); Hon R E Quine OBE (Ayre); Mr J D Q Cannan (Michael); Mr W A Gilbey (Glenfaba); Mr S C Rodan (Garff); Hon D North (Middle); Mr P Karran, Hon R K Corkill and Mr J R Kniveton (Onchan); Messrs J R Houghton and E A Crowe (Douglas North); Hon D C Cretney and Mr A C Duggan (Douglas South); Mr R P Braidwood and Mrs B J Cannell (Douglas East); Messrs J P Shimmin and A F Downie (Douglas West); Hon J A Brown (Castletown); Hon D J Gelling (Malew and Santon); Sir Miles Walker CBE LLD (hc), and Mrs P M Crowe (Rushen); with Prof T StJ N Bates, Secretary of the House.

The Chaplain took the prayers.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

The Speaker: Hon. members, the hon. member for Peel, Mrs Hannan, has leave of absence this morning to attend a funeral.

**LOCH PROMENADE, DOUGLAS — FAULTS IN ASPHALT SURFACE —
QUESTION BY MRS CANNELL**

The Speaker: Turning to our order paper then I call upon the hon. member for Douglas East, Mrs Cannell.

Mrs Cannell: Thank you, Mr Speaker, I beg leave to ask the Minister for Transport:

Is your department aware of the obvious faults in the asphalt surface on that part of the Loch Promenade, Douglas, recently resurfaced following the construction of the IRIS storage tanks?

The Speaker: The Minister for Transport to reply.

Mr Brown: Mr Speaker, my department is aware that there are visible faults in the asphalt surface on Loch Promenade. However, I would advise that contract 1 of the Douglas and Onchan stage of the IRIS master plan, to which the hon. member's question refers, is still within the defects liability period and will not be signed off by the engineer until such time as any defects which have arisen following completion of the works have been put right to the satisfaction of the engineer.

Mrs Cannell: Mr Speaker, could the hon. minister please advise this House as to what the total cost of the resurfacing works was, including the three colour-way asphalt which was used for the Loch Promenade footway, and would the hon. minister consider that this work will last approximately 50 years, as did the original footway which lasted for more than 50 years? Would he expect that this work would last the same length of time?

Mr Brown: Mr Speaker, I have no details regarding the costs of the works with me and, as far as whether or not the works would last 50 years, again I am not subject to the specification and I am not qualified to say whether it would last 50 years.

SUMMERLAND — CAVE DISCO — REFURBISHMENT — QUESTION BY MRS CANNELL

The Speaker: Hon. members, turning then to question 2, again I call upon the hon. member for Douglas East, Mrs Cannell.

Mrs Cannell: Mr Speaker, I beg leave to ask the Minister for Tourism and Leisure:

(1) *Is it your intention to refurbish the Cave Disco at the Summerland complex; and if so*

(2) *what is the estimated cost of such refurbishment?*

The Speaker: The Minister for Tourism and Leisure to reply.

Mr Cretney: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is the intention of the department to undertake a modest redecoration and refurbishment of the night club at Summerland. The facility has not been redecorated for seven years and it is now getting tired, and indeed the standards are falling below that expected of such a facility. The final format of the refurbishment has not yet been fully agreed, but I can advise that the budget cost is in the region of £100,000 to £175,000. I believe that this modest investment is fully justified in terms of providing an acceptable standard of service to our customers, in protecting the contribution which the nightclub makes to reducing the overall deficit on Summerland, and in terms of the expected life of the operation which, given the status of the Villa Marina refurbishment, is currently put at at least 2003.

Mr Cannan: How can the minister reconcile being able to spend £170,000 on refurbishing a disco when he refuses to spend a sum less than £30,000 on providing a running track surrounding the new all-weather pitch, which is proposed to be provided in the north of the Island at the Ramsey Grammar School?

The Speaker: Straying! The hon. minister to reply.

Mr Cretney: Two different subjects, really, Mr Speaker. The fact is that the disco at the Cave at Summerland makes a contribution to the overall deficit of the operation. The fact is we are there until 2003 and we have to minimise the deficit.

Mr Houghton: Mr Speaker, can the hon. minister advise whether any of the costs of the impending refurbishment of the Summerland complex are going to be financed by a private company and, if so, has he locked himself into an agreement where he can only purchase future supplies from such a company?

Mr Cretney: Mr Speaker, I can confirm that there is an arrangement being arrived at with Isle of Man Breweries. It is basically the same arrangement which was arrived at in 1989 when the previous refurbishment of the Cave was carried out. At that time there was a seven-year agreement for the sole supply of beers, lagers, wines and spirits to the brewery. A similar arrangement has been made, but we will not be locked into anything; if, for example, the Villa Marina comes ahead of stream, then it is an arrangement which we can get out of if it is felt that is the appropriate thing to do.

Mr Singer: In response to that reply, could I ask the hon. minister, in entering into this agreement or contract are you sure you are acting in accordance with financial regulations, and do you not think it is unwise to appear to be committed to one major supplier only?

Mr Cretney: I can confirm that I am absolutely sure we are acting within financial regulations. Mr McGreal, the Treasury Accountant has been involved in the discussions, and I am convinced that this is the best arrangement which could be arrived at in terms of refurbishing the complex. The Isle of Man Brewery is prepared to invest a substantial amount of money in partnership with the department and I think that this will provide a facility which we should be proud of and which will go a long way to meeting the needs of our customers both on Island and those who come to visit.

Mr Shimmin: Mr Speaker, could the minister explain whether the figure he has given is the Department of Tourism and Leisure's contribution towards the project or whether that is the total project cost in full?

Mr Cretney: Mr Speaker, that is the total price.

Mr Rodan: Mr Speaker, can the minister confirm that a professional design team have submitted proposals and plans in respect of lighting and fabric refurbishment of the Cave Disco?

Mr Cretney: In terms of that amount of detail I am aware that the management from the complex have been to discuss with a number of providers of such professional expertise, but I do not know whether a specific proposal has been submitted as yet.

Mrs Cannell: Mr Speaker, is the hon. minister aware that there is a great deal of dissatisfaction from other establishments within the constituency of East Douglas who operate and have a late licence, operate a disco, an entertainment facility for adults, and that they are unhappy with this proposal to refurbish the Cave Disco using the taxpayer's money? How can he reconcile that?

Mr Cretney: Can I clarify again, it is partly taxpayer's money, partly a partnership with the Isle of Man Brewery. Perhaps the hon. member will be aware also that I am sure a great deal of the constituents in East Douglas enjoy the facility.

SUMMERLAND — RETENTION OF DRY DISCO — QUESTION BY MRS CANNELL

The Speaker: Question 3, hon. members, and again I call upon the hon. member for Douglas East, Mrs Cannell.

Mrs Cannell: Mr Speaker, I beg leave to ask the Minister for Tourism and Leisure:

Do you intend to keep open the facility for young persons presently enjoyed on Friday evenings at the Cave Disco, Summerland?

The Speaker: I call again upon the Minister for Tourism and Leisure, Mr Cretney, to reply.

Mr Cretney: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The provision of the dry disco at Summerland represents a key element of our service provision and one to which we have a long-term commitment. It is a valuable service to our young people and one which, since it is not commercially viable, can only realistically be provided by the public sector.

Mr Houghton: Mr Speaker, does the hon. minister not agree with me that the whole Summerland complex plays an important role of family entertainment, so therefore would he not agree that the future use of the Cave Discotheque on a Friday evening, which he has very, very happily confirmed today, is an essential requirement for attracting young people off the streets and into a properly controlled environment?

Mr Cretney: I can confirm, Mr Speaker, that when the dry disco for young people was first thought about I am pleased to say that I was one of those who was then contacting the then minister, and the then minister was good enough to put in place this facility, and so I am very supportive of this concept. I do believe that young people have sophisticated tastes these days and it is nice that they are able to go into a properly built complex to enjoy their entertainment. It is properly controlled, there is a good relationship with the police and I am pleased to say that I hope that will continue into the future. Now, whether that continues on a Friday night or whether there is some other night - it may be Friday, it may be earlier on Saturday - has yet to be determined. What I am confirming today is that the dry facility will continue. It is very important and indeed I would like to see it expanded if possible.

Mr Houghton: Mr Speaker, I welcome the answer from the hon. minister, but further to that, as the member with responsibilities for the young at the Department of Education, may I respectfully appeal to the hon. minister not only to continue with current arrangements at the Cave Discotheque on a Friday night if that is the decision that is made in the department, but would he further carefully consider the use of the Cave for a Saturday night also in view of the young?

Mr Cretney: Mr Speaker, as I indicated at the start, no final decisions have been made in this respect. It does seem to me, though, that the nature of the operation at the Cave is that the adult audience come out later to start their evening's entertainment. They perhaps go around the pubs first and then come to the Cave, and so it may be that a possibility is to have an earlier session prior to the adults coming in. However, nothing has been finally decided but, as I indicated before, I would, if possible, like to extend the facilities. One of the difficulties, of course, is, young people at specific ages do not necessarily mix: you get people over 15 or 16, then there is the younger element, and it is sometimes better if those two groups can be separated and an opportunity provided for both of those, and that is what I would like to do if possible.

Mrs Cannell: Mr Speaker, I welcome the response given by the hon. minister this morning and I think it is heartfelt to hear and it will be cheering news for the youngsters outside, but what I would like to put to the minister is that, bearing in mind that the Villa Marina is subject to refurbishment and once hopefully completed in the not-too-distant future it will be providing all manner of facilities, as I understand it, and if the minister can confirm, it will not be providing a facility for the youngsters such as is provided at present by the Cave Disco, and, in view of that, what is his intention when the Villa Marina is up and running? Will he keep the Cave running for our young people?

The Speaker: Hon. minister, you may reply if you like,, but I do not think the Villa Marina is mentioned in the question.

Mr Cretney: Mr Speaker, the Villa is not mentioned in the question, but that is fine. I do not know what is going to happen with regard to the Villa Marina; I wish I did! (*Laughter*) It has taken a long time. We have tried, I hope, to work in partnership with the operators, the owners of the establishment, the Douglas Corporation. I hope in the end some proper arrangement can be arrived at.

In terms of the actual operation of the facility, I take on board the point the hon. member is making in terms of the needs to provide something for young people. I have already said that I am in favour and in support of a proper facility for young people. I am aware that parts of the Villa Marina, even in its present form, have been used in the past for young people, so it may be possible for part of the development to include that facility. However, in terms of the longer-term life of Summerland, I can give no assurances in relation to whether the Cave will continue after the Villa Marina is completed, because that decision has not been arrived at yet. We have been told for a long time that the facility at Summerland in terms of where metal comes through the concrete, for example, puts that facility at some pressure, and so there would have to be an assessment as to the structural condition of Summerland before anything happens with it, and that decision has not been made as yet. But you are right; perhaps it is something that in the not-too-distant future, together with others, we should be looking at.

Several Members: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: We are straying, hon. members, but nevertheless, the hon. member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

Mr Karran: Vainstyr Loayreyder, whilst applauding the response from the hon. minister, would the minister not agree that his department needs to look at other areas as well to help the young people in this Island that are not keen on sport, and would his department look at the possibility of providing some facility for these young people who want pop groups and some facility for young live bands so that we can get these young ones off the street? Would he have a look into that, please?

Mr Cretney: We had live bands about last week or the week before, I think, Mr Speaker. We are happy to provide whatever the customers demand. That is what we are there to do. The upstairs part of the venue is ideally suited for that kind of operation, live entertainment. We have deliberately built on the policy which my predecessors established in terms of making Summerland a family complex. We have taken out a great number of the gambling machines which were there formerly. We have deliberately gone to build upon the investment which went into the children's play area and the family nights. We are determined that it should be a family complex, not only for those locally, but also for those who we welcome when they visit us on the Island.

The Speaker: I think a final supplementary on this question, hon. members. The hon. member for Garff, Mr Rodan.

Mr Rodan: Mr Speaker, can the minister confirm that the Cave Disco, as operated on Friday evenings for young persons, operates at a loss or at best only breaks even? However, would he agree that the proposed refurbishment, coupled with the effective new management that is in place, does have the potential to make the facility a business success, thus ensuring the continuation of this important facility for young people?

Mr Cretney: Mr Speaker, I can confirm that the operation of the young persons' disco at best breaks even. I think it probably costs money, but that is a decision we made in that knowledge because we have decided that it is the right thing to do to provide a proper disco for young people, a properly controlled disco where there are arrangements with the relevant authorities to make sure it is run properly. I can confirm also that the Cave Disco does continue to make a financial contribution towards the overall deficit of the building, and that is obviously needed in terms that we do not have a bottomless pit and so it is obviously important, if we wish to have a family facility, some elements of which do not make money, that other elements within the overall establishment are able to decrease the deficit so that we are able to continue to provide the facility in its present form.

HEALTH SERVICES — NEEDLE EXCHANGE FACILITY — QUESTION BY MR BRAIDWOOD

The Speaker: Turning then, hon. members, to item 4 on your order paper, I call upon the hon. member for Douglas East, Mr Braidwood.

Mr Braidwood: Thank you, Mr Speaker, I beg leave to ask the Member for the Department of Health and Social Security:

Has the department any future intention to introduce a needle exchange facility throughout the Island?

The Speaker: The member for the Department of Health and Social Security, the hon. member for Onchan, Mr Karran, to reply.

Mr Karran: Vainstyr Loayreyder, in reply to the hon. member's question I can advise there is a working group looking at the feasibility of establishing a needle exchange facility comprising key individuals, including the department's pharmaceutical adviser, senior health

promotion officer with responsibility for drugs, alcohol and sexual health, clinical nurse specialist and the medicines inspector. This group is due to report to the health services' policy group early in the New Year. The group has drawn exclusively on the best practice and is shortly to visit a similar scheme which is up and running in the UK.

It is envisaged that the scheme will be based initially in four community pharmacies across the Island, including Ramsey, Douglas, Peel and Port Erin. Support for this initiative has been given in principle by the Manx Chemists' Association, but this will be subject to further negotiations with pharmacies. The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, which is a multi-discipline representation, has also been endorsed.

The setting up of the scheme and the funding has yet to be identified by my department, but as it is considered to be a relative priority it should get some support in the forthcoming budgetary discussions.

Mr Braidwood: Mr Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Onchan, Mr Karran, the member for the DHSS, for his reply. However, would he not agree that, particularly following last week's Aids Awareness Week, a needle exchange facility would be highly beneficial, not only leading to the reduction in the number of abandoned needles and syringes, a source of great danger to children, but also leading to savings for the health service in the treatment of individuals by reducing the chance of infection by either hepatitis or the HIV virus through the sharing of needles?

Mr Karran: Vainstyr Loayreyder, I am happy to say that this issue has been raised some time ago at Health Policy. There was a dispute between myself and my director of health as far as this was concerned, because I personally believe that we need anonymity if we are going to bring in a needle exchange scheme, and this idea of having four chemists, which is an improvement on the original proposal, needs to be done, because anonymity is important.

Now, until I see this working party, who are supposed to be the experts, it would be wrong of me to say what will be done, but I have to be honest with the hon. member that the department is fully aware of the importance of getting this needle exchange scheme going. As a member who was in the vanguard over the problems of drugs on this Island and the fact of us having our heads in the sand for so long over the issue, I can assure the hon. member my department sees it as a priority.

Mr Braidwood: Mr Speaker, I again thank the member for the DHSS for his reply, but is he aware that at the present time needles and syringes can be purchased over pharmacists' counters, although I believe there is a voluntary code of practice in operation, and would he not agree it would be advisable for this practice to be stopped and, as he has already said, all pharmacies offer a needle exchange facility if agreement can be reached with the Manx Chemists' Association?

Mr Karran: Vainstyr Loayreyder, in that voluntary code it does say to pharmacists that only in exceptional circumstances should pharmacists supply injecting equipment for drug users if the pharmacy has no arrangements for taking back contaminated equipment. I believe that there is a voluntary code at the present time. I believe, when my department comes back with a proper needle exchange scheme, then we will resolve the issue of whether needles are being sold at the present time. The problem I have at the present time is that when I originally raised the issue of a needle exchange as a member of the Department of Health and Social Security, they wanted a one-stop-shop on the Island, which meant that it did not mean very much; I think that people who had a drug problem were not going to go to one place in order to get their needles because of the easy detection of themselves to the police force. This is

primarily done to try and stop the spread of disease. I believe that when my working party comes back they will have to do what my original proposals were, and that is to have all pharmacies in this needle exchange scheme.

Mr Singer: Mr Speaker, could I ask the hon. member for Onchan if he can indicate to this hon. House the number of known addicts on hard drugs such as heroin who are resident in the Isle of Man so as to point out the severity of the problem of disposal of used needles, therefore giving a guide which would show why there is an urgent need to introduce a needle exchange facility for drug addicts with its further drain on your department's finances?

The Speaker: Hon. member, if you have the figure, sir?

Mr Karran: Vainstyr Loayreyder, I do not have the figures in front of me, but the biggest problem we have with asking for those figures - it is a bit like our population: if it is according to the government it is 70-odd thousand; if it is according to other people it is 80-odd thousand. If we were to say how many drug addicts are on this Island, I can remember well putting the motion down here many years ago and having the then Chairman of the Health Service turn round and say there were no drug addicts on the Isle of Man, when I had been talking to and consoling one mother of a drug addict, who was registered. The position is, I believe, somewhere in the region of 15; I could not be sure, but I can get that information, but if there are 15 it is like the iceberg: there are more than likely two-thirds that are hidden and not known about, especially with our affliction to hide away from how serious the drug problem is on this Island.

Mr Downie: Mr Speaker, given that the department of health intend to introduce a needle exchange facility throughout the Island, as the member has indicated, could the member inform us, is there a register of drug addicts in existence in the Isle of Man, could he at this stage state whether there has been a significant increase in the last two or three years of incidents where drugs have been intravenously injected, and what types of drugs are we seeing coming into the Island now?

The Speaker: Hon. members, again we seem to be going a long way away from the question, which was a needle exchange; nevertheless I call upon the hon. member for Onchan.

Mr Karran: Vainstyr Loayreyder, as far as I am aware there has been an increase - not a substantial increase - in the injection of drugs from what I am told. I do not have the details in front of me and it would be wrong for me to say so, but I believe that the situation is that there is a problem as regards it increasing, and I believe that it must be made quite clear to this hon. House that the health division sees it as a priority because it is the lesser of two evils and it does save us a lot of money considerably if we can stop the spread of infection. So as for the hon. member, we are not trying to underplay the situation; we know we have a serious issue that has to be addressed.

Mr Singer: Mr Speaker, could I ask the hon. member, in introducing a demand on the finances for a needle exchange facility, does the hon. member not believe that the department needs to determine the approximate number of addicts who would use the service and not say 'Well, perhaps we have got five, perhaps we have got 15, perhaps we have got 50'? Is the hon. member telling me that his department does not have any more detail than he is prepared to give to this hon. House this morning?

Mr Karran: Vainstyr Loayreyder, in the question it was to do with the needle exchange facility. I have no exact details about the number of drug addicts on the Isle of Man. Obviously the position is that I reckon that the issue of drug addiction on the Island is a lot more serious

than has been made out in this hon. House or in another place, and whilst I do not want to be throwing money at it - it would be a luxury for a change to be able to throw money at something in the health division - at the end of the day I believe that we will more likely find that there are twice as many, if not more, people who are not registered as drug addicts as there are registered as drug addicts. I believe that we will do our best to make sure that we get good value for the taxpayer as far as this issue is concerned.

The Speaker: A final supplementary, the hon. member for Douglas East, Mr Braidwood.

Mr Braidwood: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Following the endorsement for a needle exchange facility by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, would it be possible to make it a statutory obligation for general practitioners and hospital authorities to notify the anonymous register for drug abuse on individuals seen, as is the case for heavy drug abuse such as heroin, morphine and methadone? I believe this policy of notification is practised by the prison, probation and drug squad services.

Mr Karran: Vainstyr Loayreyder, I think the hon. member's question is worthy of further investigation. I believe that it would be right for me to refer this to the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs. One of the problems that we always have when we put compulsion on the medical profession is that they are not very keen, Vainstyr Loayreyder, and it is a very difficult job as the member for health to try and pin this professional body down when we are trying to get things done as far as the health service is concerned.

BILLS FOR FIRST READING

The Speaker: Hon. members, we turn then back to our order paper, and I call upon the learned Secretary.

The Secretary: The Criminal Justice (Money Laundering) Bill, Mr Bell; the Brewers (Amendment) Bill, Mrs Crowe.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that concludes the order paper for this morning. The House now stands adjourned until Tuesday next, 16th December at 10.30 a.m., in Tynwald Court.

The House adjourned at 10.33 a.m.