11 June 2020

All Tynwald Members
(by email)

Dear Mr President, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

Follow up to House of Keys, Tuesday 9 June 2020

Following Questions in the House of Keys on Tuesday, I undertook to follow up on a supplementary question which was ‘why couldn’t planning appeal hearings use the video link system in use by the Courts?’

I have now had the opportunity to query this with officers and in response they have indicated that there were a number of technical solutions considered that would allow people to make face to face representations at appeal. All of these required analysis, procedural amendments and logistical implementation (and these are now being considered as a long term option). However, the task was not to determine how inquiries could proceed virtually, but rather how planning appeals could be progressed in the short term during the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 emergency. Following an assessment using the criteria of deliverability, consistency and robustness the written representation procedure, for which processes already exist, was seen as the most appropriate. It provides for the necessary transparency and fairness.

In terms of the court system, I understand that it is a bespoke system and that the primary issue with applying it for this purpose is that all participants need to be in a government building, in other words within the GTS-administered estate, to access it. This would prove difficult both for members of the public and in a situation where Inspectors are working from the UK.

Kind regards

[Signature redacted]