

MEDIA RELEASE

Strictly embargoed until 00.01am Tuesday 21st April

Education publishes La Mare States Report

The Education Department will be seeking approval from the States at the end of May to go ahead with the long-awaited redevelopment of La Mare de Carteret Schools.

States Members voted in favour of rebuilding the schools back in November but wanted to wait for an independent review to be carried out before agreeing to the scale, scope and specification of the build.

The Review Panel report was published on Saturday 21st March.

‘The Education Board welcomes the support the panel has given to the need for us to build a five-form entry high school for up to 600 pupils, a two-form entry primary school, communication and autism base, pre-school, enhanced sports and community facilities at La Mare de Carteret,’ said Education Minister, Robert Sillars.

‘We have completed further reviews recommended by the Panel and published an options appraisal and business case for the enhanced sports facilities in partnership with the Culture and Leisure Department and Sports Commission as part of our States Report,’ said Deputy Sillars.

Whilst recommending the rebuild of La Mare de Carteret schools, the Review Panel also recommended that the Education Department looked at the wider education estate and possible future opportunities for rationalising buildings, particularly suggesting a future move from four secondary schools to three.

‘The Education Department has a strong track record of rationalising its estate. In recent years we have closed St Peter Port School, Mont Varouf and the Longfield Centre; we have moved out of Granville House, Grange House and Brock Road and in 2013 the States approved the rationalisation of our primary estate through the merger of St Sampson’s Infants with Vale Primary and the closure of St Andrew’s Primary School,’ said Deputy Sillars.

‘These are often difficult and emotive actions to take and we are pleased that the Panel have recognised that the future rationalisation of our secondary schools from four schools to three is a complex issue which would require very careful consideration by the States and that there are many factors which would influence when and how further rationalisation of our schools could take place. We have repeatedly stated publicly that we are committed to reviewing the current system of selection at 11 and all the associated issues such as College funding, catchment areas, secondary school admissions, transport and of course the optimum number of secondary schools we need taking all of these complex issues into account.

The Treasury and Resources Department are opposing the Education Department’s States Report and in their letter of comment state that *‘the States should not be asked to make a decision on the redevelopment of the La Mare de Carteret Schools’ site before key strategic decisions have been made in relation to the future of education in Guernsey including, for example: the role of selection at 11; the future organisation and delivery of post-16 education; and the rationalisation of the educational estate’*.

The letter of comment goes on to say:

However, if the States are minded to agree with the Education Department that a decision is required now, then it is the Department's view that such a decision must be conditional upon a rationalisation of the estate from four schools to three. In this event, the secondary school at the La Mare site will consequentially need to be built for 960 pupils; and it is the Department's view that it will be considerably better value for taxpayers for a school of this size to be designed and built from the start in a single phase, rather than building one now for 600 and extending it later in a second phase, as is currently envisaged by the Education Department.

The Department is unable to support the Education Department's Report or propositions and will be laying amendments consistent with the views set out in this letter of comment.

'The Education Board finds it difficult to comprehend Treasury and Resources latest objections to the rebuild of La Mare de Carteret Schools,' said Deputy Sillars.

'What we are proposing to build at La Mare now does not preclude T&Rs preferred option for a 960 pupil school in the future. Our proposals to build a 600-pupil secondary school allow full flexibility to expand the school, if necessary, after subsequent, proper, measured stakeholder consultation, the preparation of an evidence-based report to be considered by the States and a well-considered transition plan to implement any changes without detriment to the education of our young people.

'What we can't do is delay the rebuild of La Mare de Carteret schools any longer. Despite our estates team and caretakers continuing to maintain these buildings, they are simply beyond repair and we cannot allow yet another generation of children to be educated in such sub-standard facilities. I would like to pay tribute to the staff who do their absolute best in such difficult circumstances but enough is enough. We have already had to delay the opening of the schools by a year to September 2018 at the earliest. How much longer will T&Rs plans delay the much-needed rebuild? And T&Rs letter of comment is silent on the fact that even if you build a bigger school at La Mare you will still need to provide an additional 240 spaces at St Sampson's High to cater for the number of pupils coming up through the system if you want to close one of our schools. Where is the money going to come from for this extension? What about the SCIP process, don't we have to go through that before the business case is approved and we are allowed to progress? Let's not forget that the same process judged the La Mare de Carteret redevelopment as "*an exceptionally well planned and managed project, with strong stakeholder support providing a compelling business justification for proceeding.....we would recommend, therefore, that the project proceeds to the delivery stage.*" What about the additional costs for keeping La Mare de Carteret schools limping along for a few more years while we continue to debate what should be built where? Where is this money going to come from?

'What is clear, and this is supported by the Review Panel, is that a 600-pupil capacity secondary age school is required at La Mare de Carteret site whatever the future structure of education. The number of 11 to 16 year olds and the facilities required don't change depending on whether our current selective system stays or goes,' said Deputy Sillars. 'We have to look at the capacity across the whole secondary sector and take into account the need for a certain amount of spare capacity to cope with fluctuations in our school age population. The introduction of the Guernsey Federation of Secondary Schools is already leading to a managed reduction in the number of staff and associated reduction in costs as we move closer to our stated pupil:teacher ratio of 15:1.

'Our plans for the redevelopment of La Mare de Carteret schools have been developed over the last two years with full engagement of our professional staff; headteachers, teachers and support staff working in both schools and our education services.

'I agree with the Treasury and Resources Minister when he says we must get the project 'right'. Perhaps where we still differ is in our definition of 'right'. The Education Department's number one priority is to continue to improve education standards across the Bailiwick. Having modern, fit for purpose buildings helps us achieve this. The longer we argue about what's right, the more delay to the vital rebuild of these schools and the more money we will have to spend to get what we require. This is not about what we want, it is about what our staff and children need. It is time for States Members to make a decision on this and we hope to provide the information they need to enable them to make the right decision for the people of Guernsey.'

Note to Editors: Deputy Sillars, La Mare de Carteret High Headteacher, Vicky Godley, La Mare de Carteret Primary Headteacher, Diane Hand and Schools Planning Manager, Ashley Dupre are available for interview at 8.30am on Monday 20th April at La Mare de Carteret Schools – please meet in front of the Primary School. All interviews are embargoed for publication/broadcast until 00.01am Tuesday 21st April.