

**REPLY BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF
THE CULTURE AND LEISURE DEPARTMENT
TO A QUESTION ASKED PURSUANT TO RULE 6 OF THE
RULES OF PROCEDURE BY DEPUTY E. G. BEBB**

Question 1

On the 7th February this year Deputy Duquemin made a presentation concerning the Guernsey French Language (Guernésiais) and a new commission that would be formed. This was seen as a positive innovation at the time, but details were not fully formed. Indeed the only concrete proposal in the presentation was to introduce the Guernésiais word for milk onto milk cartons produced by the Guernsey Dairy.

Given that the department has now had a full quarter of a year to consider the details could I ask what the terms of reference for the commission will be?

Answer

The Department has requested Deputy Duquemin establish a shadow Guernsey Language Commission in order to progress its strategy which was presented to the public on 7 February 2013. One of the first tasks of the shadow Commission will be to develop a business plan and to work with the Department's officers to develop governance arrangements that will include the terms of reference. The business plan and governance arrangements will then be submitted to the Department's Board for approval.

Question 2

Will the commission take on the role similar to that of other language commission such as the Académie Française or the Opus Fundatum Latinitas in suggesting appropriate words for official use whilst respecting regional anomalies?

Answer

The origins of Guernésiais is primarily as a spoken language, a patois, and the usage of words and the spelling of words will always be a potentially contentious issue. This was highlighted by a number of the 'leading' language enthusiasts who Deputy Darren Duquemin spoke to ahead of the formation of the shadow Guernsey Language Commission. Bluntly, they were concerned that an individual or individuals would be given the power to dictate to them as to what is correct and not correct and they did not want this to happen. Whilst the GLC has not discussed this matter yet, it is anticipated that they may be of the opinion that it will be more important to embrace the diversity of the language rather than be too prescriptive.

Question 3

If the commission is to take on this role, how will the commissioners make these decisions given the inherent differences that exist in Guernésiais usage?

Answer

As above.

Question 4

Will the commission take the approach of assimilation with French for the benefit of ease or will it prefer distinction for the purpose of highlighting the distinct form of Guernésiais?

Answer

It is a fact that the similarity of 'the language' to French is an issue for the GLC to contend with and one that has already caused much discussion. Commonly referred to as 'Guernsey French' and/or 'patois', it is felt that neither of these monikers properly reflect the importance of the language. It is for this reason that the GLC will use, in increasing frequency, 'Guernésiais' as the name of the language.

Question 5

What other objectives have the commission been tasked with and how will these be measured to ensure that the commission provides good value for the people of Guernsey?

Answer

The GLC has been tasked with helping, as a partner, deliver the Culture and Leisure Department's mandate in relation to Guernésiais, much in the same way that the Guernsey Sports Commission assists the Department in the area of sport and the Guernsey Arts Commission assists in the area of the arts. The GLC will largely, with reference to the Culture and Leisure Department, be responsible for its own objectives and how they deliver value for money in everything that they do. The GLC have clearly stated what they regard as success being, namely: "Whether we are fluent or use just a few phrases, islanders of all ages are proud of Guernsey's own language." This ethos is also illustrated in a curve on a graph where fluency is plotted against people. The presentation with this graph and success criteria can be downloaded at language.gg.

Question 6

What will be the commission's role in relation to Guernésiais education?

Answer

The GLC's role in relation to the education of Guernésiais will be to identify ways in which it can be improved and to provide the necessary support and funding to make it happen. Whilst the GLC will not teach the language per se, it is one of their main aims to create and fund an integrated educational programme that delivers proven results, particularly aimed at what it considers to be the crucial adult 'market'.

Question 7

Will the commission have the ability or the advisory capacity to fund new initiatives?

Answer

In addition to the funding that it receives from the States of Guernsey, via Culture and Leisure, the GLC will also raise funds from both the private sector and the general public. This funding will support new initiatives that are driven by the GLC and also by Guernésiais enthusiasts, both individuals and groups, who will be able to apply to the GLC for grants for their own existing or new initiatives.

Question 8

What further initiatives will the commission undertake for the furtherance of Guernésiais?

Answer

The GLC will very shortly be finalising and publishing its first 'business plan' that will detail its first initiatives. Briefly, the plan will be split into four main areas to reflect the past, present and future of the language. These are (1) research and record Guernésiais... the past, (2) increase awareness of Guernésiais... the present, (3) education of Guernésiais... the future and (4) fund raising for the above initiatives. You will be able to download the plan on language.gg and we will email you to let you know when it is published.

Question 9

Will the commission be required to make an annual report to the Assembly on the efficacy of its approach and what measures will be utilised to measure its efficacy?

Answer

The GLC will produce an annual report, including 'financials', and a 'business plan' and present these to the Culture and Leisure board both as documents and presentation each year, exactly in the same way as the Guernsey Sports Commission and Guernsey Arts Commission. The Culture and Leisure Department will continually and robustly challenge the GLC to ensure that it delivers against the department's own mandate and delivers value for money for the States' funding provided.

Question 10

Given that the formation of the commission is viewed as an important development in Guernésiais, could I please ask for the date of the official launch of the Commission?

Answer

The 'official launch' of the GLC took place, as planned, on Thursday 9 May, Liberation Day. The GLC's new website, language.gg, went live and also the opinion column in the Guernsey Press was printed in Guernésiais with the English translation underneath.

Question 11

Finally, could I ask what measures the Culture and Leisure Department will be undertaking to ensure greater bilingual usage within the State's of Guernsey?

Answer

Greater bilingual usage with the States of Guernsey' will certainly be an aim of the GLC and they will supported in this endeavour with vigour by the Culture and Leisure Department. Together we will encourage others within the States of Guernsey to actively consider how they can add kudos to Guernsey's own language by using Guernésiais in many different ways including print and signage. The new chief officer of the Department itself has already printed his new business card bilingually, with Guernésiais on one side and English on the reverse.

Date of Receipt of the Question: 7th May 2013

Date of Reply: 22nd May 2013