

The Lord de Mauley TD



Government Whips Office

House of Lords

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The Lord Berkeley OBE
House of Lords
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15 November 2010

Dear Lord Berkeley,

Please find attached my response to various questions and points raised during the debate on the Civil List on 10th November.

I hope this fills any gaps I did not cover on the day.

Yours sincerely,

Rupert de Mauley

LORD de MAULEY

Response to points raised in the Civil List Debate of 10th November

Lord Berkeley had some concerns about the travel arrangements regarding charter and helicopter flights, and why the grant-in-aid is funding twelve members of the Royal Family. He also queried the value of the Galapagos Islands visit. As I indicated in the debate, the decision on the mode of travel for a particular journey takes account of safety, security, value for money, the best use of the time of the member of the Royal Family in question, and the requirements of the visit. Also taken into account are the disruption to the public, environmental considerations and appropriateness for the occasion.

It may be helpful if I provide some more background information. The grant-in-aid meets the cost of official journeys undertaken by or in support of members of the Royal Family by air and rail. Almost 3,000 official engagements were undertaken across the UK and overseas by members of the Royal Family during the year to 31st March 2010. To meet these engagements it is necessary to involve a number of members of the Royal Family.

Short single journeys by helicopter are discouraged by the Royal Household and do not normally take place for journeys of 50 miles or less. However, use of helicopters on official visits where several short journeys are involved permits the maximum number of engagements to take place in a day. This makes best use of the time of the member of the Royal Family in question and minimises the disruption to the public when car journeys and a police escort may be used as an alternative.

The programme of overseas tours is determined by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and UK Trade and Investment, and vetted by the Royal Visits Committee. All UK trips are planned in consultation with the Members of the Royal Family and approved by The Queen.

During the debate details were requested of how the new grant to support the Sovereign will operate.

We have a long standing arrangement under which the net revenue of the Crown Estate is paid directly to the Exchequer. There is no plan for that to change. What will change is the way that support is paid to the Royal Household. In future it will be voted annually through the Treasury Estimate.

The Government and the Royal Household believe that this is appropriate because the Crown Estate remains the property of The Queen as Sovereign. The agreed formula will show that the Sovereign Support Grant is a relatively modest proportion of the Estate's net revenue.

I should make it clear that this will not be hypothecation. The legislation for the new grant will not top slice a section of the Crown Estate's net revenue for the Royal Household, or indeed any other purpose. The formula will simply

use the Crown Estate's net revenue as an ingredient of the calculation of the Sovereign Support Grant.

One reason for using this approach is that Crown Estate revenue is volatile, as was observed during the debate. The legislation will therefore contain mechanisms to prevent this volatility causing the Sovereign Support Grant to fluctuate inappropriately. Lord Brooke asked whether some such device might be considered, and I am happy to confirm that will indeed be the case.

At this stage I cannot, however, give details of the content of the legislation, which remain under consideration. The direction set out by the Chancellor, however, is clear.

Finally, Baroness Jones of Whitchurch also asked why the current arrangements need to change. It is simply that the current arrangements are now nearly 40 years old and the Government wants to take a fresh look to see if improvements in the current funding arrangements can be made. The Royal Household operates to modern professional standards and is thus able to accept the discipline of annual voted grants. As I said during the debate on Wednesday, a single grant structure will allow the Royal Household to set its own priorities and control costs.

I am copying this letter to all Peers who took part in the debate and am placing a copy in the Library of the House.