

2024.07.16

2.9 Deputy J. Renouf of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the Government's public realm strategy (OQ.138/2024)

Further to his response to Written Question 255/2024, will the Minister state the annual budget he believes will be required to deliver the Government's public realm strategy?

The Connétable of St. John (The Minister for Infrastructure):

I thank the Deputy for his question. The public realm movement strategy provides a strategic framework for the planning and development of St. Helier's public realm. The strategy sets out key objectives, not a project programme. This is a function of the funding and access to streets to undertake works. The works require repaving, new planting, alfresco areas, crossings and other street layout changes. This work by its nature has to be carried out while maintaining access to business, the community and amenities with the minimum of disruption. Meaning that construction has to be phased around certain seasons of the year to avoid affecting the functioning of town. Regardless of the budget, what is required for a successful public realm programme is consistent funding. It is often regarded to as the hokey-cokey budget because it is in, it is out. What we need is some surety. The forthcoming Government Plan will set expenditure which both balances spending priorities and provides a sensible public realm programme that balances our ambition with achievability. I would like to assure the Deputy and Members the new Government Plan will include continued investment in this important area.

2.9.1 Deputy J. Renouf:

In his answer to question 255, the Minister said the Deputy Chief Minister is: "... undertaking exploratory work to look at a more adventurous public realm programme, including sports facilities and illness prevention." Can Minister state how he anticipates such a programme would be funded?

The Connétable of St. John:

That will be a question for the Deputy Chief Minister. I am the Minister for Infrastructure and answering about the public realm.

2.9.2 Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

The Minister spoke about hokey-cokey and I assume that he meant the problem that exists in now having a year-to-year budget. Would he agree that the only way to really get rid of the hokey-cokey is to go back to 3-year fixed budgets?

The Connétable of St. John:

From a personal perspective, I am used to working with longer budgets than 12 months, I am also used to working with zero budgets and I am a fan of both.

2.9.3 Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

Can I press the Minister kindly, if he says hokey-cokey in the answer to one question then surely he is alluding to the fact that he wants some certainty in terms of minimum budgets for the underlying question that is being answered?

The Connétable of St. John:

The question of budgeting should be directed to the Minister for Treasury and Resources in my opinion. As the Deputy will be aware, we face different pressures at different times and we have to adjust our plan, and that is what we do.

2.9.4 Deputy A.F. Curtis:

In the original answer to the first question, the Minister referenced a St. Helier public realm and movement strategy. Will he confirm this is the strategy published in 2021 and whether he intends to replace that or modify it before implementing projects?

The Connétable of St. John:

The Deputy is correct. We are going to be discussing at the next Generation Steering Group meeting on 24th July, public realm, St. Helier task force and the terms of reference, which will include reviewing that strategy.

2.9.5 Deputy J. Renouf:

Is the Minister able to give any indication at all about the sums of money that he thinks are required to deliver the public realm strategy? He has talked about it being in and out. He must have some idea of the sums of money. Are we talking millions of pounds, tens of millions of pounds; can he give us some idea?

The Connétable of St. John:

I can tell the Deputy that it is millions of pounds, but I would not like to give a preview of the Government Plan.