

2.1 Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier of the Minister for Transport regarding the transportation of incinerator ash between the incinerator and La Collette:

Would the Minister give details as to the frequency of the transportation of incinerator ash consignments between the incinerator and La Collette? Whether any account is taken of weather conditions during the operations and what regime is in place to ensure the careful transport of ash between Bellozanne and La Collette, particularly the prevention of “fugitive emissions” at each stage of the process?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye of St. Helier (The Minister for Transport):

The average frequency for incinerator ash transportation from Bellozanne to La Collette is 33 deliveries per week. This frequency varies according to how many incinerator streams are in operation at the Bellozanne plant and the workflow availability of ash transportation lorries. Ash is transported in most weather conditions, however if the wind speed is excessive the operation will be postponed until the wind drops. When incinerator bottom ash exits the incinerator’s water quench bath it is transported to a temporary weathering bay which is an external concrete storage area at Bellozanne with a facility for capturing leachate. From the weathering bay the ash is transported in covered lorries to the lined ash pit at La Collette where it is tipped, covered and eventually sealed with a capping liner. A similar process, although a slightly more intensive one, applies to incinerator fly ash.

2.1.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Could I refer the Minister to a report from the Head of Environmental Protection and I quote: “TTS’ (Transport and Technical Services) officers have confirmed that there were difficulties experienced in the operational aspects of the work resulting in the fugitive emissions of ash from the area and likely to have been taken off site.” In the light of what he has just said can he assure the House that this was a one-off occurrence and that ash is not regularly being blown off La Collette into the surrounding areas?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

Yes, Sir, I can give that assurance. Indeed, as soon as there was any indication that ash was being blown from the site, operations ceased immediately. In fact I can go further and inform the House of the result of a Planning Environment investigation into the alleged migration of waste from the La Collette site. It says: “No physical evidence exists to suggest that significant pollution of controlled waters has occurred”; in other words has escaped from the site entirely into the sea, and no evidence is available to suggest that the operator, the Transport and Technical Services Department, has operated in anything less than an environmentally sound manner. I hope that gives reassurance to Members.

2.1.2 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains of St. Clement:

I am grateful for the Minister’s reassurances this morning. I wonder if he could just clarify one thing? I am glad to hear that the ash is transported in lorries in a covered fashion. During the unloading process, the tipping process, is the ash dry and if so, surely with any wind blowing there is likely to be some loss of ash in that process? What mechanism is used to ensure during the tipping process it is not liable to become airborne?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

It is my understanding, Sir, that normally - and if I may refer in this instance to the slightly more toxic incinerator ash - when emptying the silo at Bellozanne the fly ash is mixed with water until it is similar to a cake mix. This is done to prevent the ash from getting airborne during discharge or transportation. The dampened ash is then channelled into a covered lorry, transported directly to La Collette site, put into a lined ash pit and covered immediately. So I think I can give a fairly clear assurance that the ash is still in a damp condition when it is being unloaded.

2.1.3 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire of St. Helier:

Could the Minister explain what the reason was behind the ash being stored temporarily outside of the lined pits at La Collette?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

One of the lined pits had basically filled up and the second lined pit was not immediately ready for use. Consequently ash was placed on top of the lined pit, suitably covered and then removed and transferred at the appropriate juncture.

2.1.4 Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier:

What the Minister describes sounds very safe. But what I would like to ask the Minister, can he tell us who polices this and inspects that these practices are carried out in the way he describes and how often these practices are tested?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

There are 2 regulators involved, the Health and Safety Protection Team under Health and Social Services and also the Environment Protection Officer under the Planning and Environment Department. There are also Environment Officers who are experienced in the handling of ash on site and the department itself ensures that approved processes are adhered to. I do want to, while standing, Sir, take this opportunity to assure both Members and the public that there have been an embarrassing number of scare stories emanating from some Members of this House that are entirely unfounded. I understand that even now there are some parents in the Island who are preventing their children from swimming at the Havre des Pas swimming pool on the grounds that it may have been polluted by toxic ash from the La Collette site. This is, I regret to say, patent nonsense. The Havre des Pas swimming pool is entirely safe for anyone to swim in for as long as they wish.

2.1.5 Deputy J.A. Martin:

Sorry, Sir, can I just press the Minister? He did not answer, he told us who does the inspections but he did not tell us how often they are carried out. Could he please inform the House that?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

The approved processes are adhered to regularly by the staff who work on the site. In other words effective monitoring is carried out on a daily basis.

2.1.6 The Connétable of St. Helier:

It is more a point of clarification. In his answer to Deputy Le Claire about the fact that ash was stored in a mound outside the ash pits for a period of time, the Minister said that the ash was suitably covered and yet in the report to which I referred earlier from the Head of Health Protection there is an admission that there were difficulties experienced and there was emission of ash off the site. So I am confused. Is the Minister saying that there was no emission of ash off site or is he saying, in fact is he agreeing with the Environmental Health Department in saying, yes, he accepts there was some fugitive emission off site?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

My understanding is fairly clear on this matter. Ash is deposited, in this case it was deposited on top of the top liner of a pre-existing ash pit and it was then covered with soot. However, to move the ash when the time came to put into a new lined ash pit, clearly you have to dig into the ash and its covering. So during the period between a digger digging into one pit pile and moving it a matter of 50 to 100 metres to another one, then clearly there is a level of exposure of ash to the elements. In the instance that was referred to, which I believe took place on 18th May, there were some prevailing windy conditions and when it became clear that ash was being blown off site, and that is not suggesting that it was being blown necessarily into the sea, the operations were curtailed. That is essentially the situation. It is not possible to move ash without exposing ash.