

22.04.25

8 Deputy G.J. Truscott of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the resurfacing of the Railway Walk (OQ.74/2022)

Will the Minister advise how often the Railway Walk should be resurfaced in accordance with the current maintenance regime and state when it was last resurfaced?

Deputy K.C. Lewis (The Minister for Infrastructure):

Major resurfacing work falls out of the landscape maintenance contract. The last major resurfacing work was carried out to the western end approximately 8 years ago. With the laying of the new gas main along the Railway Walk now mostly complete, officers are preparing for resurfacing work to take place this coming winter.

3.8.1 Deputy G.J. Truscott:

I thank the Minister for his reply, but the reality is that the Railway Walk surface has been poorly maintained over the years and consequently continues to deteriorate. This is another example of a poorly maintained public asset. Is there anything the Minister can do in the last month or so of his tenure to remedy this unsatisfactory situation?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

The Railway Walk is patched as required but the actual resurfacing of the whole Railway Walk, that will take place in the winter because, unlike other surfaces, hoggin has to be done and rolled in damp conditions to make sure it compacts properly. It cannot be done in the summer because it is far too powdery. But it will be done this winter and contracts will be going out for that work.

The Bailiff:

[Interruption] Does somebody need to answer that? Thank you for the contribution to the Greffier's fighting fund.

3.8.2 The Connétable of St. Brelade:

With regard to the resurfacing of the Railway Walk, would the Minister confirm that when it is resurfaced proper falls and cambers will be incorporated to obviate the flooding which has arisen in recent times because of the poor cambers into the roads and paths of Les Quennevais Park, where residents suffered from water inundation. There was some remedying undertaken in conjunction with the Parish but I would like to ensure that that remains in place. In addition, there are areas of tarmac where the Railway Walk crosses roads which are suffering from root heave. The Minister's department have failed to react to deal with that over the past 2 years. Can I ask him to give some urgency to remedying that fault as well?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Indeed, as I just pointed out, the Gas Works have been doing substantial works on Railway Walk. There was no point doing any serious maintenance until they finished. It is coming to an end now, which I am delighted to say that all repair works will be undertaken. As I say, we have had substantial amounts of damage due to severe storms in the winter, which have also damaged the hoggin surface, and that will be remedied in the winter along with any tarmac as required.

3.8.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Does the Minister consider the Railway Walk to be a shared space for active travel?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes, indeed.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

A supplemental?

The Bailiff:

A little bit outside the parameters of the question, but yes, supplemental question.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I think you will find, Sir, the next part is directly ...

The Bailiff:

That will be good.

3.8.4 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Given that it is a shared space for active travel, on the resurfacing will the Minister undertake to try and emphasise that shared travel space in some way? Because education on what shared travel, shared spaces are is really important for the development of active travel.

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes, I share the Deputy's concerns here. We do need people to look out for each other. Obviously, it is not possible on a hoggin surface to put in a demarcation line, nor would it be desirable. We do ask cyclists to be aware of pedestrians and vice versa and it is still a legal requirement, by the way, to have a bell on a bicycle in Jersey, so a gentle ring on the bell if you are approaching pedestrians and if they would step to one side, and give them a wave and be polite and courteous. It is a shared area and we hope that everybody would get along. As I say, because it is hoggin we cannot put any lines down. I am resisting putting extra signs on the Railway Walk as I am frequently accused of urbanising the countryside, so I would like to keep signs to a minimum.

3.8.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

Just because it is hoggin, of course, does not mean that hogging the road is okay. It is the last question time. We have to get them in as much as we can.

The Bailiff:

Well, I think you will find ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

But there is a question, Sir.

The Bailiff:

I think you will find that Standing Orders do not necessarily require you to get puns in **[Laughter]** at the last question time or otherwise, but if you would like to ask your question that would be ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

I have been reading the wrong copy of Standing Orders. I found an old copy of Deputy Duhamel's in the drawer and it has clearly been amended, saying that you have to make a pun at every possible opportunity, but I will refrain. Insofar as that excess speed along the Railway Walk, indeed along any hoggin surface, may affect the quality and the wear and tear of the track itself, can the Minister tell us whether there is a speed limit on the Railway Walk, particularly in relation to bicycles or even electric scooters, electric bikes, et cetera?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

It is a very interesting question. At the moment I would say no, but the electric bikes are limited in speed. I believe it is 25 kilometres per hour or thereabouts. But as I say, we do ask people to look out for each other and take appropriate speed. It is not very comfortable for a cyclist doing any particular speed on a hoggin surface, but a lot of off-road cyclists do use it. The serious road cyclists tend to stick to tarmac when they want to get up any reasonable speed. Obviously, when I was a young boy, if you got up to 15 miles an hour with the wind behind you, you were doing well, but the modern carbon fibre bikes can do very excessive speeds and we ask people to respect pedestrians and other users of the path.

3.8.6 Deputy G.J. Truscott:

I thank the Minister and my colleagues for asking the Minister questions on this subject. I am pleased to hear that progress is being made this year. The Minister did indicate in a previous question that alternative materials were being considered. Is that still the case? Perhaps he could elaborate.

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

We are always looking at new materials but, as I say, it is a hoggin surface, which has to be compacted when damp. It is quite an intense process and we do have expert contractors that can do the work. We are always looking at new surfaces that we can use and special treatments to make sure the hoggin stays in place, but at the moment it is the original hoggin, I believe, that we are using.