

2.5 Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services:

Following the Buncefield oil depot disaster and the gas explosion in Tunnell Street in 1982, what steps, if any, is the Minister taking to ensure the safety of the La Collette area in light of the proposal to locate the new Energy from Waste plant adjacent to the gas holding tanks, the fuel farm, the L.P.G. (liquefied petroleum gas) station, the power station and the composting site?

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

I realise that some Members consider oral questions to be a bit of a knockabout session but I think States Members should take the questions they put with seriousness and a degree of responsibility. I am disappointed that Deputy Lewis, in dealing with this serious subject, has not seen fit to discuss the matter prior to today with either myself or, as far as I am aware, any senior member of my department. We are, therefore, at a loss to understand why the Deputy conflates the matters that occurred at the gas emplacement in Tunnell Street in 1982 with the La Collette site. The public are concerned about these matters and conflating these issues is, I think, a serious error. To look on the bright side, it may be that the Deputy has been watching too many of his disaster movies but I think the Deputy should be aware that when the public are aware of these types of questions they can create alarm. I wish to assure the House that in general response to the Deputy's question I have taken all appropriate steps with the appropriate authorities and experts to ensure safety at La Collette. The current planning application is subject to guidelines that were brought forward in the 1999 report by the Major Hazards Unit of the U.K. Health and Safety Executive. I am fully confident that everybody involved who takes responsibility for safety in relation to La Collette, the L.P.G. station, the power station, the composting site, and who will do in terms of the E.f.W. (Energy from Waste) plant, take their jobs extremely seriously and that safety is not a major issue.

2.5.1 Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I am saddened that the Minister is disappointed but I consider it my job to ensure that public safety is ensured. Accidents do happen. We cannot eliminate accidents; we can just minimise them. Will the Minister ensure that there are sufficiently high buffering mounds between the various facilities to provide maximum safety?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

If I am advised that buffering mounds are what is required I will certainly ensure that buffering mounds are in place. I repeat once again, I am disappointed with the way the Deputy has put this question. There is absolutely no linkage whatsoever between the gas explosion in Tunnell Street in 1982 - over 20 years ago - and the types of risk assessment and safety procedures that are in hand now. I regret to say that this is a piece of political opportunism that amounts to scare-mongering.

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

I am disappointed with the Minister's answers and his cavalier attitude. Is the Minister familiar with the phrase of having all one's eggs in one basket?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

Yes, I am familiar with that phrase, Sir.

Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

In that case, what is he going to do about it?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I am afraid I do not have any eggs in stock at the moment, Sir.

2.5.3 Deputy C.H. Egré of St. Peter:

If I could add confirmation through the Minister. Could the Minister confirm that there is ongoing risk assessment for that area and we are moving forward, other than what happened in 1999?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

Yes, I can confirm that in conjunction with the Planning Department, Fire and Rescue Services and the Health and Safety Inspectorate, the Transport and Technical Services Department is currently considering all aspects of the long-term plans for development of the La Collette 2 site, which includes the potential for hazard by the location of the L.P.G. plant and the fuel depot.

2.5.4 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

I did ask this question in relation to the Buncefield disaster a number of months ago to the Minister and I am just a little bit disappointed, to be honest, with the way that he has answered this question this morning. So I rise to ask a question in particular. Given that his department and he himself are now fully co-operating and investigating the issues for La Collette and the relevant authorities, what if any are the concerns of the Fire Department for the plans that are proposed at this time?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I believe that I have been through the Buncefield issue in some detail already. For those Members who cannot remember what I said there is a very dramatic difference between...

Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

That is not the question. If I might interrupt, I did ask quite specifically what, if any, are the concerns of the Fire Department in relation to the plans for La Collette?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I am not aware that the Fire Department has any major concerns, other than the ones that you would expect the Fire Department to have about any fuel depot.