

Scrutiny Panel submission.

Earth Project Jersey (EPJ) would like to thank the Scrutiny Panel for extending this kind invitation to contribute to the ongoing review and hopefully to help develop solutions for the benefit of the Island as a whole.

We still believe that Jersey has a moral duty to try to achieve as many of the goals of the Carbon Neutral Roadmap as possible by 2030, and to use the 2030 to 2035 window to review and refine the various steps as adopted and then the 2035 to 2050 window to finish and refine every aspect of the work and then to move even further towards a future goal of being carbon negative.

The major challenge facing us all is that of population uncertainty, we believe that the single overriding need is for a long-term strategic population policy that is closely linked to a long term strategic economic vision such as was developed by our forebears in 1948 and carried forward with such success.

Climate Emergency Fund.

Climate Emergency Fund (including proposals to freeze Road Fuel Duty and increase in the Vehicle Emissions Duty on higher CO₂ emitting vehicles) (p.80 GP23-26)

It is accepted that in the short term the CEF is going to have to be fully underwritten by the public purse, but in the medium- and longer-term innovative solutions and initiatives could result in an increasing contribution from the private sector and possible joint ventures or seed funding equity models.

An example is the current proposal for on Island production of 'green' hydrogen, the model has a built-in provision for an equity stake (up to 5%) to be given to the Public; future revenues could be directed to the CEF. This could be a template for many other green initiatives which might be eligible for funding assistance at the start-up phase.

In the current economic climate, it makes sense and is socially justifiable to put in place a freeze on Road Fuel Duty, but it must be clearly understood that this is a short-term concession.

We believe that the current proposal for the introduction of UK style "MoT" testing is not appropriate for the generality of vehicles in Jersey.

There is already adequate provision for any vehicles travelling to the UK and EU to be tested and certified.

An alternative approach would be to introduce a combined emissions and mileage test and charge, this idea is based upon the idea of 'polluter pays', the more pollution a vehicle emits, the higher the tariff per mile driven.

In essence this measures a vehicle's emissions, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, particulates, and any other emissions the government wishes to monitor, this 'score'

is then entered into a banding table that sets out the cost per mile for that level of pollution. The tariff is then simply multiplied by the annual mileage (starting in say year 3 for new vehicles) to produce the annual road use charge going forward, say 2 yearly, this will result in a direct link between pollution and cost.

Vehicles being taken off Island can simply register mileage on departure and return to have it discounted from their total.

It is of note that the owners of vintage / veteran cars, which are generally more polluting, will not be unduly charged because they naturally do much lower mileages.

All new vehicles have manufacturers figures for emissions, these will form the basis of the vehicle's charges for the first 3 years and can be levied upon initial registration, used vehicles coming into the Island should be logged and possibly given a 3-6 grace period.

On a broader view, the CEF is the natural starting point for a wide range of initiatives and the coordinating and oversight function for them to ensure effective reporting and cost benefit analysis.

There is also a potential for the CEF to fund research into the experiences of other similar 'small island jurisdictions' to share problems and solutions. There is a wide spectrum of different priorities across jurisdictions, and this could be a serious opportunity for Jersey to not only source solutions for our challenges but also to refine and adapt them and then derive economic benefits from sharing them back out again. If as part of the work of the CEF there is an underlying mission to develop sustainable solutions and to then commercialise them and market them around the world this could help to generate funding as well as benefiting both Jersey and other jurisdictions.

Hydrocarbons and Fuels.

Hydrocarbons and Fuels (p.56 GP23-26 Annex)

There will continue to be a requirement, for the foreseeable future for hydrocarbons as lubricants and in specialised processes but their continued use as fuel must be phased out as quickly as possible.

The future fuel of choice for most transport is probably going to be hydrogen, as in hydrogen fuel cells, batteries are just too resource hungry and environmentally damaging to be viable as a long-term solution

Jersey has an opportunity to transition to hydrogen quite rapidly, so long as there is the political will and support.

Initially the proposal is to import ammonia for cracking, in the medium to long term we will be able to establish on island electrolysis powered by our 'green' electricity supply from the Euro grid, in the long term there is a high probability we will be able to employ geothermal and renewable power, this will help to bring us much improved long term energy security and the possibility of being able to sell electricity back to the grid.

Countryside, Biodiversity, Water & Air Quality.

Countryside, Biodiversity, Water and Air Quality (p.55 GP23-26 Annex)

It is remarkable to read the opening phrase “There is growing recognition of the value and services that the countryside” and to realise the gulf that has developed between the government and the people of Jersey in the understanding of the relevance of the natural environment.

This illustrates the desperate urgency of the need to educate and inform government thinking.

As part of a general transition to regenerative agriculture at the earliest possible time, something that should be not open for debate, the Island urgently needs to know the current levels of soil carbon and soil organic matter in every possible countryside location, all agricultural land, hedgerows, woodlands, heathland, water meadows etcetera.

In a small island we can build up a database of environmental information that could be a model for others, together with soil and water testing we need bird, mammal and insect surveys, soil food web analysis and plant survey data, all this information combined could provide a proper detailed picture of the whole ecosystem and become a great resource with which to monitor progress.

A key element to the reduction in the carbon footprint of agriculture is the removal of all agricultural chemicals, luckily, world affairs are already helping to price them out of use.

By going chemical free we will not only enhance the soil but also the crops grown in a regenerative agricultural system.

It is fortuitous that there is already a laboratory facility available at Howard Davis Farm that is currently unused (or under used at best!) this would be a much better use of resources in terms of the Island’s goals.

Access to the countryside, whether by road, cycle track, or footpaths should all be part of a coordinated plan and should be the responsibility of the Road Infrastructure section.

As mentioned above, there should be a rolling process, in conjunction with Jersey Water to ensure that there is an accurate and up to date record of water testing across the whole Island. The ongoing saga of the PFAS pollution of the water supply must be an example of the importance of regular comprehensive testing and the recording of all the data.

It is also appropriate that the data from air quality monitoring should be incorporated into this dataset.

Sewage Waste Strategy.

Sewage Waste Strategy (p.59 GP23-26)

Sadly, as a result of the failure of NMC the delivery / completion of the new STW has been pushed back to 2026. However, once it is on stream there will be a step change in the treatment of our sewage and a significant reduction both nitrate and effluent dumping into St Aubin's Bay.

The solid waste residue can be treated with high intensity ultraviolet light to remove human and animal pathogens and can then be mixed with compost for regenerative agriculture and carbon sequestration.

A 'waste' product can thus be transformed into an environmental and economic benefit, as per the CEF comments above this could become a model that Jersey can export / share and thus derive an added value from.

Process Chemicals.

Process chemicals (p.57 GP23-26 Annex)

Whilst there is little that can be done to mitigate the effects of global economic trends, apart from hedging with forward purchasing, there is room for improvements in the practices currently employed on Island.

One of the most significant opportunities is in the area of food waste, something in excess of 14,000 tonnes of food waste goes to the EFW each year. In extreme times when there is a shortage of high calorific value feedstock, the EFW must use fuel oil to raise the temperature of wet food waste, this is environmental madness!

As was proven by a 3-month study at Jersey Airport, and has been subsequently adopted by the Longueville Manor Hotel, all food waste can be processed into safe high-quality compost. This compost can be safely used for growing human food and is another potential input for regenerative agriculture and carbon sequestration, once proven and quantified this process could be shared with other small jurisdictions.

We believe that there is a need for an analysis of all the inputs to the EFW in order to examine the critical areas that might benefit from more sustainable practices. An ideal outcome would be the reduction of waste to a point where the EFW could be decommissioned and sold.

As an additional point, it is vital that we establish a network of green waste composting sites across the Island to provide local area facilities; this is important because of the current problems with the La Collette facility, they only produce 'soil improver' not compost, and corrupt the product by the addition of gypsum / plasterboard.

In addition, we recommend that a pilot is set up to test the commercial use of vraic (seaweed) for compost and soil enrichment, another area for CEF seed funding possibly.

Government Property portfolio.

The most urgent requirement is for an all-island policy change to make sustainable development, carbon accounting, energy cost in use and embedded energy accounting mandatory.

Public buildings.

In addition to the above I would like to raise a very serious concern about the current government policy of concentrating / centralising all government offices and functions, this is clearly in conflict with best practice, recent developments in working practices, and sustainability.

There are clear benefits from maintaining several operational centres, not least for disaster recovery, 'do not put all your eggs in one basket' is the phrase that comes to mind. It is vital that there is a much higher degree of resilience built into the system than previously and that it is based upon a clear long term strategic plan and not the usual 4 yearly knee jerk reaction.

The Covid pandemic introduced and proved the working from home model and there are jurisdictions that are researching / trialling the 4-day week model, Jersey should be following suit.

Multiple locations will also allow for the sensible distribution of services; for example, pensions and welfare should be close to the bus station and carparking; many of the administrative, non-public facing functions can safely be dispersed to peripheral locations, sadly decisions are often driven by self-interest at high levels. Another factor is the effect on businesses in the immediate vicinity, access to food & beverage outlets for staff, access to general retail and other services. Spreading the workforce will have a far wider economic benefit.

In addition, there is the commuter effect, concentrating all functions in one location will concentrate pressure upon public transport and parking facilities, dispersal will reduce this pressure and if well thought out might encourage greater adoption of 'Active Travel'.

By far the worst example of all the ill effects of massive centralisation is the proposed new hospital on the top of Westmount.

Every day the entire staff are going to have to travel up the hill and down, creating additional pressure on access routes and requiring additional parking, there are no local food & beverage outlets and only one small supermarket in walking distance, there is no alternative to going into town for all the usual 'lunchtime' activities, causing more traffic issues.

Pedestrian access is laughable and cycle access is barely any better, little or no chance of enhanced Active Travel being encouraged.

Emergency vehicle access will be severely diminished from the current provision, the proposed £38 million expenditure on road 'improvements' is for the construction phase and will have little or no benefits for the hospital when in use.

Public Housing.

There is a fundamental question to be asked surrounding this topic and that is: - in a small island with limited land resources is it morally acceptable, fair and equitable for a small proportion of the public to be subsidised in the purchase of homes by other taxpayers who may not be able to afford to purchase homes?

Would it not be more equitable to direct those funds towards the provision of high quality affordable rental housing?

So long as there is a fair and open access for all to those entitled to live in Jersey to be accommodated in safe, sustainable, energy efficient and affordable housing that surely fulfils the duty of a civilised society. This was a central tenet of the Housing Law of 1970, the subsequent introduction of 'States Loan' housing introduced the concept that people who could not afford to buy a property should for some reason be subsidised by other taxpayers.

In time this became unaffordable and was phased out, but the sense of 'entitlement' had become embedded in the public consciousness and there was not the political will to close it off, the current 'affordable purchase' scheme is the present-day manifestation of this.

Overall, there is a complete absence of any attempt to move to sustainable construction across the whole of the public sector, this is ethically and morally indefensible in the light of the current global climate crisis.

There is no excuse for Jersey not to move immediately to adopting a 'best practice' model for the construction of residential properties. Sustainable materials, passive house standards of energy efficiency, microfibre filters, grey water use are a few examples. For multi-unit developments the adoption of rainwater harvesting, solar pv or green / garden roofs, communal / shared car use and communal recycling are all in use in other jurisdictions.

Fin.

EPJ would like to thank the Panel for their patience and would be happy to attend upon the Panel to answer any questions.