

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE
BY THE CONNÉTABLE OF ST. JOHN
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 14th JUNE 2021
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 21st JUNE 2021**

Question

Will the Minister advise –

- (a) what bids, if any, the Infrastructure, Housing and Environment Department made for funding from the two tranches of Fiscal Stimulus funding with regard to both extending the mains drains network and road safety schemes;
- (b) if no such bids were made, why not; and
- (c) if no such bids were made, what the Minister is doing to ensure that basic drains infrastructure is extended to reach more areas in a timely fashion?

Answer

(a) No bids were made from the Infrastructure, Housing and Environment Department for fiscal stimulus funding for extending the mains drains network or road safety.

(b) The principal drainage priority for the Island is to reduce surface water infiltration in catchments which are struggling during high rainfall events. The Island does have a very good connection rate with 92% of properties connected to the mains drains. We do want to increase this figure and we would like to undertake addition extensions, but they need to be prioritised as the cost per property in some catchments is very high. We also need to reduce infiltration in the downstream catchments to ensure there is capacity that the networks can be extended and won't be overloaded.

The programme of road safety schemes is led by a combination of collision cluster analysis and structured appraisal of road safety intervention requests from the public and government and non-government organisations. Where it is found that a useful intervention can be made, they generally fall into one of three categories education, enforcement and engineering. If it is an enforcement action, a request is made to the appropriate police force, education matters would normally be passed to the police's Road Safety Officer/ DVS Road Safety Panel (interested parties who promote public campaigns) and finally, engineering issues which would be reviewed by IHE engineers.

Where there is a potential road engineering intervention, this then goes through a triage system to identify where it sits in our prioritised programme. Engineering intervention generally takes 2yrs+ to deliver due to the need to profile workload in accordance with budget and resources, but also the complexity that is often involved in these works – the necessary design, review / auditing, consultation, land acquisition, drainage issues, street works co-ordination, etc.

Most request are not truly road safety, in that there is not a statistically significant injury accident history, rather it is about improving accessibility and creating more comfortable infrastructure for vulnerable road users. So we must also work in line with the ambitions of the Sustainable Transport Policy (STP) as it encourages active travel. However, areas with a collisions history receive the highest priority.

Funding for such schemes is available from within the Department's budgets, Car Park Trading Fund, Climate Emergency Fund (where there is a significant STP benefit) and in some instances Planning Obligation Agreements, where demand or desire for movement is increased by a new development, this is a useful mechanism as it often also provides the mechanism to acquire the land required to accommodate any new facilities, such as footpaths or crossings.

The government's road strategy and procedures are in the process of being reviewed within a safe systems framework as required by P.5/2021. and this will result in a more holistic and strategic approach across Government, including working in collaboration with multiple key stakeholders.

There was a very short timescale given for the delivery of fiscal stimulus bids. Extension to mains drains does take a significant amount of design time and the Department would not have been able to deliver a scheme in such a short period. Similarly, as set out, road safety schemes projects require significant design and consultation work up-front prior to scheme being implemented.

- The timelines in which to plan, design tender and construct these projects are limited to the end of 2021 under Fiscal Stimulus rules, therefore it would be unrealistic to expect the projects to be completed in time.
- There is already a capital programme to cover works in these areas which is prioritised and funded by the Infrastructure Rolling Vote.
- Existing staff capacity is low due to recent recruitment freezes and the outcomes of the Target Operating Model. If staff were deployed to work on fiscal Stimulus projects, then there is significant risk that the other pre-existing projects would not get completed.

(c) With the population of the Island increasing, we are updating our liquid waste strategy which was last carried out in 2013. At that time the sewage treatment works was the critical infrastructure which needed updating to modern standards. The construction of the new sewage treatment works is now well under way and due to be completed late 2023.

The review of the liquid waste strategy will now concentrate on the network, where we need to replace aging infrastructure as well as upgrading and extending for the islands increasing population. This will identify where funding is required and form the basis of future capital bids. The strategy is due to be completed by the end of 2022.