

3.13 The Connétable of St. Helier of the Minister for the Environment regarding the improvement of levels of environmental protection and enhancement in the Island:

Given the Minister's statement in the report *The Environment in Figures: A report on the condition of Jersey's environment 2011-2015* (R.92/2016) that: "It is a matter of concern that this report is not more positive", what steps, if any, will the Minister take to improve levels of environmental protection and enhancement in the remaining period of this Council of Ministers?

Deputy S.G. Luce of St. Martin (The Minister for Environment):

The *Environment in Figures* report is an excellent document that looks back at trends in our environment. As the report says, we all enjoy a high quality environment but progress in some areas has been slower than I would like and we need to do more, hence my concern. The Strategic Plan committed us to developing a long-term vision for our environment, our community and our economy and earlier this year My Jersey survey was undertaken, which will put, I am informed, the environment firmly at the top of people's priorities. The Council of Ministers, as we have already been told this afternoon, will shortly review both that survey and the *Environment in Figures* report. But to answer the Constable's specific and, I hope, achievable environmental goals I would just say this: I am undertaking to bring forward a new water plan to address nitrate and pesticide levels. I am also doing an ongoing piece of work on the implementation of the energy plan to reduce carbon emissions. I am updating the strategy to protect our biodiversity and I am also co-ordinating the work, I hope, on a climate change adaptation plan. I look forward to Members support in these and other environmental initiatives I might bring in the rest of this session.

3.13.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

The Minister singles out in his forward the failure of the States to tackle congestion, which was supposed to be reduced by 15 per cent by last year and has achieved 1.6 per cent reduction. In the summary of the priorities for the next period the Minister states that he wants to see continued progress towards the 15 per cent reduction in peak-time congestion. Will the Minister work with his fellow Minister at the Department for Infrastructure to take some important steps to make this goal achievable because clearly nothing is happening at the moment and we are going to have another failure in 5 years unless some action is taken?

The Deputy of St. Martin:

I do not need to start working with the Minister for Infrastructure because I already am working with him and I work with him frequently. I also work with the Constable of St. Helier on the Future St. Helier project. We tackle these issues on a regular basis. The Sustainable Transport Policy certainly set out a number of goals. It is unfortunate that in the past the States Assembly has chosen to remove some of the teeth that were in that policy, which would have given us more opportunity to reduce the congestion charges. I would say to the Constable, I feel that we are slowly getting there. Certainly we have a bus service which is much improved. It is better than it ever has been with more routes [**Approbation**] and more buses and I am as bad as anybody. I am a Jerseyman who loves to drive his car and it takes a lot to persuade me out of it. But I am persuaded and I hope others will be too. I look forward to working with the Constable and the Minister for Infrastructure in the coming couple of years to try our very, very best to increase the use of public transport in order to reduce congestion.

3.13.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Is the Department for the Environment under-funded in the opinion of the Minister?

The Deputy of St. Martin:

If the Deputy wanted to use other words and say: “Would the Minister like more money to run his department and initiate new polices?” the answer would certainly be yes. Any Minister would be the same. We all have a job to do and we all want to do as much and as best we possibly can. The more money we have the easier that becomes. But I have to be realistic, the Council of Ministers have prioritised health and education and Future St. Helier, and those are all very, very, important subjects as well as developing the economy. I do what I can. I have money and I use it to the best of my ability. But the answer to the Deputy: would I like more? Yes, we would all like more but we have to be realistic. We do the best we can with the resources available.

3.13.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

I am sure that the Minister, like me, and many others, believes that the environment is of utmost importance, not simply locally to us but obviously the global challenges that we face as a world together. Also that the environment covers the many current aims that the Council of Ministers have to do with education and health, which are all affected one way or the other by the maintenance of a healthy and sustainable environment. With that said, will the Minister state what stance he took against fighting in the cuts in his own department, which I believe is already underfunded and many others believe to be the case. Did he stand up to the cuts that were proposed or did he simply say: “Yes, I will accept the cuts to be made”?

The Deputy of St. Martin:

The Government of this Island has made a commitment to reduce where it can its expenditure. The public of the Island want us to do that. It is made very clear day after day that people want us to spend less in order to take less from them. When the Council of Ministers spent the 8 or 9 months already we have had this year trying to work out the best way forward we all set ourselves targets and I, like every other Minister, went back to his ministry to see what could be achieved. I have made a decision that we will reduce the amount of advice we give, become more regulatory. We looked at ways of reducing the expenditure and we have come up with a way of meeting the targets that were set for everybody. I have to say, I think I have been extremely fortunate. I have had members of staff reaching retirement age and I have managed to find ways of reducing my budget. I have met the targets that were set for me and I feel that moving forward I will be able to continue to deliver the service but in a more efficient way in the future.

3.13.4 Deputy A.D. Lewis:

The Minister will know that of course one of the ways of reducing congestion is encouraging more cycling. Is the Minister prepared to somewhat throw the rule book out the window with regards to planning and really come up with some blue sky thinking as to how cycle tracks can be put in place, such as allowing or insisting that all land owners adjacent to main roads have to provide or allow to be provided within their fields cycle paths so we can create a proper network? Would the Minister consider such radical thinking?

The Deputy of St. Martin:

I would venture to suggest that if I was a Minister who decided to throw the rule book as regards planning out of the window I would not be the Minister for Planning for very long. But I take on board what the Deputy says. I cannot see myself or my department being as creative as he suggests with forcing people to put cycle paths in their fields. But certainly I look forward to working, as I said, with the Minister for Infrastructure and the Constable of St. Helier on how we can be more creative in the way that cyclists are allowed to use St. Helier itself. Certainly when you travel abroad and we travel into the U.K. you see roads now where cyclists are allowed to travel in both directions where cars may be only allowed to travel in one.

[16:00]

That is the sort of blue sky thinking and initiative that I look forward to bringing to this House in the near future.

3.13.5 Deputy A.D. Lewis:

The Minister is talking there about urban cycling but the Constable was talking about commuter traffic congestion in St. Helier. How does he expect to resolve the issue of cars coming into St. Helier if one of the options is cycling but there are very few cycle tracks to use to get in St. Helier. Can he think of some blue sky thinking to make that happen quicker?

The Deputy of St. Martin:

I take on board the Deputy's comments. It is a challenge for cyclists coming in and out of St. Helier from the rural areas. Our main roads are not great. They are not wide and they do handle a large amount of traffic. Cycling is not the easiest when you have cars, lorries, travelling past you at high speeds, and I take his point on board about providing cycle ways. It may be about using lane networks. It may be about where the opportunity arises using parts of fields but it is certainly not something that I could advocate wholesale in the future.

3.13.6 Deputy G.P. Southern:

To what extent does the provision of a Hoppa bus service or its equivalent play a part in his thinking about congestion, particularly in the urban areas, especially St. Helier?

The Deputy of St. Martin:

The Hoppa bus service is something which comes under the Minister for Infrastructure's portfolio. But, certainly in my view, I know in discussions I have had with LibertyBus in the past they have ideas about buses crossing town as opposed to going around town at the end and the beginning of certain routes. I would seek to talk to them again about Hoppa bus services to see what we can do. I think in the past a Hoppa bus service, a standalone Hoppa bus service, has not been as profitable as it might have been but there certainly are some scopes for a normal route being extended, either at the beginning or at the end of that route, to encompass a Hoppa bus-type service.

3.13.7 The Connétable of St. Helier:

If I could take the Minister back to his report, he says, and I quote: "... without a significantly revised approach achieving anything close to the target of a 15 per cent reduction in peak time travel will be impossible." I welcome the Minister's willingness to work with the various departments responsible but will he also confirm that the suggestions in the report that we need to put up parking charges to tackle congestion would be extremely unfair, given that half of those driving into town every day are not going to public car parks at all but are accessing private non-residential parking? Will he undertake to work with the Minister for Treasury and Resources to see what can be done to levy some kind of charge on these car parks, which are not helping the shopper at all; they are helping the commuter who does not need to worry about parking charges going up. Thank you.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

The Constable will know when I have in the past attended with him areas like the Havre des Pas working group, users group, and others similar, parking is always an issue at the top of people's agenda. Whether you live in town, when you come into town, everybody is concerned about parking. It has recently come to my attention that the standards that we apply to parking on planning applications are not up to scratch and we need to do more. We are working on that

at the moment. Yes, I take on board the Constable's suggestion, we need to look at parking, and continue to need to look at parking, in St. Helier as a way of helping to solve the congestion problem. But certainly I would point out to the Constable that maybe one of the areas we could look at is school buses. You do not need to be an expert to find out that the time it takes you to get into town in a car in the school holidays is considerably easier than it is when schools are in. So there is work to do in all parts of parking and traffic, and school buses could be one solution.