



Brexit Review Panel

Brexit Review

Witness: The Minister for External Relations

Wednesday, 11th November 2020

Panel:

Deputy K.F. Morel of St. Lawrence (Chair)

Deputy D. Johnson of St. Mary (Vice-Chair)

Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade

Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier

Senator K.L. Moore

Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier

Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier

Witnesses:

Senator I.J. Gorst, The Minister for External Relations

Mr. D. Walwyn, Director, External Relations

Mr. L. Goddard, Acting Director, Customs and Immigration

Mr. D. Houseago, Group Director, Economy and Partnerships

Mr. D. Scott, Director, Economic Development

[11:32]

Deputy K.F. Morel of St. Lawrence (Chair):

Good morning, Minister. Thank you for joining us today for this public hearing with the Brexit Review Panel as we get ever closer to the deadline for Brexit. We know this time it is going to take place at the end of December. We will start, I will introduce the panel, and then if you might introduce yourself and introduce your officers as they come up, because I know you have a number of officers with you today. I am Deputy Kirsten Morel, chair of the panel. We have the Deputy of St. Mary who is the vice-chair of the panel, Deputy Ward, Deputy Gardiner, Senator Moore, the Connétable of St.

Brelade and Deputy Higgins. I believe that is all of the panel who are here today. We will make a start once you have introduced yourself.

The Minister for External Relations:

Good morning, Chair, and panel. I am Ian Gorst, the Minister for External Relations. I am joined by a number of officials and if they need to speak then I will introduce them as they do. But I will just introduce David Walwyn, the director who is overseeing the team and co-ordinating the team dealing with all things Brexit.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Brilliant, thank you. You are probably pleased to know I have to leave quite promptly at 1.00 p.m. so it is unlikely to go on beyond 1.00 p.m. for that reason. So we will start, Minister. Please can you provide your most recent updated risk assessment or tell us what you see as the most important risks of the various Brexit outcomes and their implications for the Island?

The Minister for External Relations:

I have felt I suppose for the last number of days that the U.K. (United Kingdom) were moving towards the possibility of a deal. [offline] There have been a number of fishing, there might be what they would call a landing zone for fishing for the U.K. around a continuity arrangement for between 3 and 5 years. Therefore that leaves the most controversial area really being the level playing field area. But with parliamentarians that I have spoken to this week, so I am not just talking about Ministers being optimistic, but parliamentarians who sit on select committees across the Houses of Parliament in the U.K., they are more optimistic this week than I have known them in a while. So there is a likelihood of a deal. But that deal, as we have been saying publicly for a number of months, is likely to be light or very thin, depending on how you refer to it. That of course presents challenges to us around border checks, and no doubt we will come on and talk about that, around compliance with those checks. It may remove the risk of tariffs but we cannot be certain of that yet, which would be a positive thing. It would of course remove the risk of no further negotiated outcome. On top of whether the U.K. gets a deal or not is then whether we believe what is negotiated in regard to fish for us is appropriate and what is negotiated in regard to goods for us is appropriate. So there is a need for the U.K. to get a deal and on top of that there is then a need for us to believe that what has been negotiated on our behalf is also appropriate. So those risks remain. I think they have reduced slightly.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Thank you and apologies for having my camera pointing the wrong way. It is the first time that has happened but you got a good view of my umbrella. Minister, it was something I raised in the debate yesterday was that this is a key period for these negotiations. What do you see as the kind of

deadline for the negotiations themselves and how are you feeding into them? What is the mechanism by which you feed into that?

The Minister for External Relations:

Yes, Chair, I was rather cut off in my prime yesterday with a 15-minute speech limit, but there we are. That is democracy as they say. For me I suppose the reason that I wanted to say more than I was able to was that every single day now we are requiring to navigate the return questions from the E.U. (European Union), think about legal text. We have had more draft amendments this morning. Therefore, for me, the best interests of Jersey was very much whether someone needed to remain in this office in order to do that, rather than all of the other. So I know that is difficult. I find it difficult but there we are. So, is there going to be though a deal this week as was indicated by some? I do not think so. But the pressure is definitely mounting. The speed of work and return questions and text is increasing. But we could realistically still be 2 or 3 weeks away from a deal.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Minister, coming back on-Island, during the recent public and invitation-only Beyond Brexit online sessions, did the communication with Islanders and businesses regarding the end of the Brexit transition period broadly follow the advice issued in 2019 or have there been any updates to the public with regard to Brexit?

The Minister for External Relations:

[offline] It was very much trialling what I needed to do for me to be prepared. I think the general feeling though across business is that they are, because of COVID strangely, much more prepared than they were. Because contingency plans have had to be tried and tested.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Absolutely. Are you able, Minister, to advise the panel of any specific areas of concern raised by businesses during those sessions?

The Minister for External Relations:

There are things around customs arrangements and form-filling, as it were, even if that is electronically. Also the bureaucracy, which businesses were still concerned about. Customs and Immigration had some good sessions in that Beyond Brexit. They have been out talking to businesses. **[offline]** Each business needs to think about its own line of goods that it imports and what the effect might be and therefore what notifications and procedures they need to go through. So, for me, I took away there was some concern there. There was a request from the Chamber of Commerce to facilitate some training sessions for businesses. I asked officials to take that away

[offline] give you an update today on whether that has happened. But I think it was around bureaucracy that most concerns were raised.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

I keep losing the feed from you, Minister. I do not know if that is affecting other panel members as well or if it is just me.

Deputy D. Johnson of St. Mary (vice-chair):

No, it is not just you, Chair. It is jerky at times, yes.

The Minister for External Relations:

That is not the first time that has happened today then, Chair. I am just going to ask an official to swap computers if that is okay. It is just going to take them a minute so if you want to keep going for now.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

I was just thinking we need a broadcasting test card for this sort of situation. In those sessions, I do not need a list, but overall which business sectors were invited to those sessions? Was it all business sectors? Did you ensure that there was a wide range?

The Minister for External Relations:

Yes, the agriculture, but there were, more broadly, sessions moderated by Chamber of Commerce, which were open to all their members.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Excellent, thank you. Minister, you have said that COVID has helped with the preparations and obviously we have almost done a rehearsal for these preparations. But, overall, do you feel that Islanders and businesses have taken the necessary steps to prepare for the changes in January?

The Minister for External Relations:

I think it is fair to say that not yet every business has. I am not sure that every Islander has. That was one of the reasons why we wanted to run the Beyond Brexit sessions. We need to keep communicating. Businesses, as I say, it is very much bureaucratic and the issues that they need to deal with. Some specific sectors of the economy, for example fishing, I have asked officials and the Minister for the Environment has asked officials to think about support packages to facilitate eliminating what will be increased costs of export, but also support for looking to new markets. So that is the piece of work that government is now doing. For Islanders, it is thinking about their travel arrangements for next year. If they are taking their car to the Continent they need to get their

international driving permit. If they are taking their pet or they have horses that they want to take to the Continent, all of those things that they need to be speaking to their vets about and the relevant authorities.

[11:45]

Deputy K.F. Morel:

With regard to border checks for businesses into the E.U., do you feel that businesses are ready for increased border checks if they are exporting to the E.U.? This particularly affects the fishing industry but there may be others as well.

The Minister for External Relations:

I cannot say that they are absolutely ready. Some are and others still need to prepare. Again that was why we held those sessions so that it came back to the forefront of their minds so that they did prepare. Officials across government stand ready together with Jersey business. They are a critical element of helping businesses prepare. They stand ready to help in any way they can. There will always be an element of businesses and likewise Islanders that only think about it on 2nd January.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Yes, that is something I appreciate. You cannot force people to be prepared, absolutely. Minister, did you note any specific concerns raised by E.U. nationals who may have attended the online event? I do not know if that was something. I do not know if E.U. nationals were able to attend and if they had any particular ...

The Minister for External Relations:

We did have an event for the Honorary Consuls and they were joined by some consular colleagues based at embassies in the U.K. They did not have or raise specific concerns other than general ongoing what was happening with the settled status regime, which of course those applications have really been slowed down because of COVID, because of not being able to have face-to-face meetings. That has made it very difficult for E.U. nationals to complete the paperwork that they needed. I have personally, in my own mailbag, had some E.U. nationals who are long-term residents of Jersey who really felt that it was a bureaucratic process and they felt it was unwelcoming. I think I have said it before, and you have definitely raised it, Chair, I apologise for that. There is no intention on the part of Government to be unwelcoming to those E.U. citizens. We really value them and it is a difficult process that has to be gone through. We have tried to make it as easy as possible. It is easier than in the U.K. But I still recognise that for some the very process of their home country, which is what they now consider us, to have to ask them to prove their residency for the last number of years is personally difficult. I apologise for that. But I really do ask those citizens to continue to

complete that process. There is of course, certainly from France, a concern that, post the transition period ending, they will have to have passports rather than national I.D. (identification) cards to come to visit the Island. That will be an ongoing difficulty unfortunately. But that was a concern that was raised and it has been raised on a number of occasions with us.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Absolutely. Has the hospitality sector raised any concerns about loss of trade with regard to the National I.D. cards versus passports issue?

The Minister for External Relations:

They have raised the general issue. It is more the carriers, so Condor and Manche Îles Express. These issues have been raised with London and they have been raised by the hospitality associations in the U.K. and the transport associations in the U.K. We have aligned ourselves with their positions. Because I think the way that this is going to change, if it is ever going to change, and I am not optimistic at this stage, is for the U.K. Government to see that it is really detrimentally affecting their travel market.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Yes. Going back, just before I pass over to Deputy Gardiner, to the issue of the bureaucracy around the settlement scheme. I was wondering, and you may want to ask the director of Customs and Immigration, is there anything that we can do at our end to make it more welcoming and less bureaucratic in that sense? Are we doing anything to try to achieve that?

The Minister for External Relations:

I would say that they are. They have been, within the realms of what is possible, very understanding of Islanders having to produce documents, I.D. cards, having to have them recertified. So there is very much on offer a personalised service in the way that there is not in the United Kingdom. But that goes some way to helping but it is still difficult. Luke, I do not know if you would like to say anymore?

Acting Director, Customs and Immigration:

Good morning, Minister and Deputy. There is little more I can add, but certainly we are caught between a bit of a rock and a hard place. We want to assist those people who need advice as to all aspects of both immigration and customs for that matter. Yet we are also in a position to have to ensure compliance with the controls that have been put in place. So we have to balance it carefully in how we manage those requests that come to us. But, as the Minister points out, we are in an enviable position to the U.K. where we have a far more personal relationship with, not only the public, but with carriers and those involved in the tourist industry. They can come directly to us for advice

on what they can do to ease the process for new employees coming next year, for current employees that require settled status. We have a constant engagement. In fact this week I spoke to a complete group of the dairy farmers for their particular interest in bringing employees over next year and their current employees. So we are really giving it as much of a personalised service as we can.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Brilliant, thank you. Minister, I am going to pass over to Deputy Gardiner now who has a few further questions.

Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier:

Good morning, Minister. I would like to continue and ask a bit more about settlement scheme and I know that it was not an easy process. I know that as a department you have done a lot to attract people to do this. Can you please update how many people applied until now and how many do you think are left to apply?

The Minister for External Relations:

I will pass that to Luke. The last time I had the numbers it was just over 12,000 or around that mark that had applied. There is unfortunately, as I have said, because of COVID, quite a large backlog. Officials are trying to work through that in the best way that they can. We know we still have another 6 months for those applications to be submitted. But they will be processed as quickly as they can. Luke, I do not know if you want to add anything?

Acting Director, Customs and Immigration:

There is not too much more to add, the numbers, we are just short of 14,000 applications now. Over 4,500 were granted and have been given the appropriate status and that was up until March this year. We have only had a dribble that we have managed to deal with since then. The outstanding amount, all but shy of about 800, have been processed to the point of just needing verification of one single point, which is nationality and identity. Today, I am assured we will be launching an online system to allow those outstanding applicants to be able to complete that process without needing to come and see us in person. Because obviously it is something we can then deal with en masse. Once we have had the first few through we expect to be able to deal with the thousands very, very quickly. Certainly well before the end of the grace period in June next year. I would imagine what we would certainly like to do is aim to have the majority in by the end of the year to give that assurance for the anxiety that I am sure some E.U. nationals must be feeling to not have the results of their application. We have done all we can in terms of putting out an email to the bulk load of those thousands that are outstanding to make them aware of the circumstances and give them reassurance that there is not a concern. They do not require to have their permission until after June next year. They have protected rights simply by being eligible for the scheme, even if

they have not applied to the scheme, until June next year. Nevertheless, we appreciate the anxiety that some of those E.U. nationals must be feeling and we are doing what we can to get around it.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

I would like to follow up with the numbers. 14,000 is who applied and still have not got the approval, or it is including the people who did not start the process yet?

Acting Director, Customs and Immigration:

So we have just shy of 14,000 applications in total, 4,600 of those have been granted so we have an outstanding amount of the difference, 9,000 or so. It is those that we will be sending out the invitations to complete by the online process. We gave an initial indication of there being 20,000 E.U. nationals in the Island who may need to apply to the scheme. Doing the maths, that means that potentially 6,000 are left. However, it was very much an approximation that came to us through different sources. There was no specific number recorded in the Island. There was no need to record those people who were E.U. nationals because of their free movement here. Therefore, it is quite speculative, there may be those that are E.U. nationals but also have British nationality and do not need to apply. There may be those who were here and have subsequently left and obviously those who may have arrived and were not counted in that figure beforehand. Also a number of children that are born to E.U. nationals are eligible for British nationality, so they may have been included but in fact do not need to apply. So we have to give an approximation to that 20,000, and I am already pretty satisfied with the numbers that we are getting. We are receiving approximately 200 applications a week at the moment, so this is probably going to give us another 2,000 or 3,000, I should imagine, even by the end of the year.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

The people who have applied already and then the process, they are on your radar and you can follow up. The 6,000 that might be on the Island and did not apply, what are the plans to reach out and to engage and to raise awareness that it has to be done? If it is by email, if it is by letter, if it is by events, or are any plans in place to reach out to the people who still did not engage with you?

Acting Director, Customs:

We have done a considerable amount over the last 2 years to try to raise awareness through employers, through local charity groups. Especially to those vulnerable people who we understand may have what they consider to be more important things on their mind than sorting out their immigration status. But we are trying to reach out especially to the vulnerable groups to make sure that message gets to them. Using the local media and events is what we have been using so much at the moment, the Consuls. I have spoken to a number of different organisations in different sectors, construction, housing and health, as well as hospitality and agriculture, to ensure that all

those people who can be reached via employers can be reached in that way. Equally, we have the 6-month grace period next year. It gives us another 6 months to keep pushing that message out and keep reminding people.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

All these people are registered with Social Security I can imagine. They are on your books. Would it be considered to send them an official letter so they receive something on their registered address and that something that has been sent, they received it? Hopefully, the address is correct and they can maybe react as it maybe did not reach through the employer or through the Honorary Consul.

Acting Director, Customs and Immigration:

It is certainly something we can look at and follow up with. There are some difficulties in that the data that is recorded by Social Security is not always accurate in relation to someone's nationality. But, nevertheless, it is certainly another area we can look at to see if we can follow up in the same way you are referring to.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Thank you.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Sorry, could I just break in, because I know Deputy Higgins has a question, which I missed in the chat. I do apologise. Could I just ask Deputy Higgins to step in?

Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier:

It is just following up on the question regarding I.D.s, passports in the U.K. I understand our position is we have to follow what the U.K. is saying because we are a member of the Common Travel Area. However, has the department discussed the possibility of a Channel Islands bubble? Whereby, although we can prevent people travelling on into the U.K., it would be possible for, let us say, the French to come across on holiday using an I.D. card but they would be prevented from going on further into the Common Travel Area. Has that been explored?

The Minister for External Relations:

Luke, can I just ask you to deal with that from an official level, because it is not possible? Then if there is a political answer that is needed I will come back and address that.

Acting Director, Customs and Immigration:

Yes, there are real technical difficulties. Suggestions just as you are referring to, Deputy Higgins, have been considered.

[12:00]

It does cause considerable technical issues in terms of how we would then take responsibility for the inability or the control of those people that were in the Island to not then travel on to the U.K. How could we give assurances to the U.K. that we would ensure that kind of permission could be controlled appropriately? So to us it would feel beyond the possibility of a practical solution to allow someone who is travelling somewhere in the Island and then to have an outward control from the Island to ensure every single person who leaves on an aircraft or a vessel then to the U.K. has not recently arrived from France.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

So there is no way then at all that, as Special Branch have a watchlist, as all people coming into the Island have to sign a general declaration, so you know who is coming beforehand. In the case of tourists coming into the Island, can their names not be recorded in a database and checked off with the airlines and the ferry companies? They do not allow them to move out of the Island.

Acting Director, Customs and Immigration:

In the ways that certainly we see some of the abilities of data to be shared and acted on, certainly in the movies, is not as simple a solution as it would seem. To have definitive identity for every single person that comes in, clearly names that are on passenger lists do not provide full identity of that person. That would have to be recorded via their identity documents to ensure that we have the proper identity of that person. Equally, that would also have to be produced on an outward movement. The outward movement only records a person's name if you present identity to your carrying company. It is for security purposes at the moment, not specifically for Special Branch or for Customs and Immigration. It would, I think without doubt, put a jeopardy to the Island's membership of the Common Travel Area if we were to act that differently from the U.K. There would have to be serious concerns on the U.K.'s part as to whether they would introduce an immigration control between the Channel Islands and the U.K.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

I am just trying to think out of the box to see if we can try to solve this problem. If we go through Gatwick, for example, if I am flying to the Island, when I check in I have to go through a thing where there is a camera, takes my photograph, and that is checked at the booking desk. Can a system like that not be introduced?

Acting Director, Customs and Immigration:

I can certainly look further into the information that you are suggesting to us but it would be an immense part of a technical solution to resolve this issue. It does not mean that it is impossible. But

I think our biggest concern would be that of our relationship with the U.K. within the Common Travel Area. That would be probably my overarching concern and that is clearly at a political level how we would stand as to jeopardising such a position with the U.K. A technical solution would be expensive and difficult to manage but it would not be impossible. I do not know if the solution would justify the resolution to the situation we find ourselves in.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

I will leave it with you.

Acting Director, Customs and Immigration:

Thank you, Deputy.

The Minister for External Relations:

I think it is fair to say, and I think you sort of touched on it very delicately, that do Islanders really want to be having to show some form of I.D., which is checked and verified, leaving Jersey simply to travel to the U.K., which is above and beyond a check that we might have currently by some airlines at the gate. It is helpful thinking about are there alternative solutions in the way that you were thinking about, Deputy. But I know that Luke and his team have circled around some of these issues in the past to see if there are ways around them. So far they have not found any that would be effective or cost-efficient.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

I would like to follow up with other questions.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Yes, please, Deputy Gardiner.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Minister, I would like to go back to your previous answers about challenges that trade raised with you such as electronically filling forms. Can you please advise if our Customs I.T. (information technology) systems are ready to deal with new processes in 2 months, because there will be new processes?

The Minister for External Relations:

Yes, they are. Customs and Immigration were months and months, if not years ago, telling us that they had cut-off dates for getting their new systems in. I think they were somewhat doubted. But the reality means that, because they made those decisions with great foresight, they do now have

robust systems in place. I am not sure that Paul is on the line, so, Luke, I fear that you are the talking head on this one as well. But they are very well prepared.

Acting Director, Customs and Immigration:

Thank you, Minister, not too much to add to that. You are absolutely right, the customs system was updated and had in place the ability for what will be needed next year for the additional paperwork and specifically the data concerning tariff codes that need to be entered into declarations as a requirement. That was built into the system in preparation for the departure from the E.U. last year. So fortunately we were well ahead of the game to be able to have that in place in readiness for a no deal. The biggest point is really what we have already spoken about, is the engagement with the traders to make sure they are prepared and understand how to use it and what information is needed to go in there. But certainly the system is in place and the immigration system is equally in place. We built a whole additional section to our case management system to manage the settlement scheme. The fortunate thing is the case management system we have, we already just manage E.U. nationals as they come to us requiring immigration permission for next year. So that is already in place.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Thank you. The question that you mentioned a no deal, Minister, would you provide an update on the staffing and administrative challenges you think the Government will face following a no-deal Brexit, or additional challenges as a result of COVID?

The Minister for External Relations:

I do not think there will be any additional staffing requirements. We are, in government, already staffed and prepared. The contingency planning contingent of government continues to do their work. They are liaising with carriers and with local resilience authorities in the U.K. and we are prepared for that eventuality.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Thank you, Minister. You mentioned in previous answers to Deputy Morel's question about the challenges faced in export. I would like to ask if our Island infrastructure is ready for import checks, which will be on food and live animals, for example?

The Minister for External Relations:

Are we ready right now today for the additional checks that will be required? The answer to that is no. Will we be ready by the time we get to the end of the transition period? I have been absolutely clear with officials that, even though there is some latitude and the U.K. is not intending to have all

of its facilities up and running until July of next year, I have been clear with Jersey officials that we have to have the ability on 1st January to be able to carry out the necessary checks.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Thank you.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Just before we pass on, Deputy Higgins has another question.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

We know on 1st January we are no longer in the E.U. Yes, we have all the questions of tariffs and all the arrangements for that. But of course if we are not part of the E.U. then what is the position on imports from say the United States or other countries of the world, which in the past have been tied to E.U. arrangements? Can you give me an update on that please?

The Minister for External Relations:

So this is the point where every other trading relationship, unless there is a free-trade arrangement, will fall to W.T.O. (World Trade Organization) rules.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

In relation to countries like the U.S. (United States), is that more advantageous than the current E.U. arrangement or worse?

The Minister for External Relations:

There is not a U.S./E.U. current arrangement. So I think it probably could be argued that the arrangement will be not be dissimilar to what is currently in place today. This is one of the reasons why the U.K. Government is keen, or has been keen, to organise a new arrangement.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

If I could ask you to look at that in a bit more detail. If you could provide some information to the panel it would be appreciated. Thank you.

The Minister for External Relations:

Yes, more than happy to do that.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

I am now going to pass to the Connétable of St. Brelade who is going to ask a few questions about fisheries.

Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade:

I appreciate, Minister, you mentioned briefly the U.K. landing zones and having a level playing field. But could you update the panel as to the status of the Granville Bay treaty in the light of the recent decision of the U.K. Government to pass the permissive extent clause as part of its Fisheries Bill?

The Minister for External Relations:

Yes. I can firstly say that those 2 things are not connected, or not directly connected. Of course they are both fishing matters. They are both connected with Brexit. The U.K. Fisheries Bill, the permissive extent clause, no doubt we will come on and talk about that later. The Fisheries Bill is a piece of legislation, which would give effect to allowing the U.K. to give effect to anything that it agrees with Europe for future fishing issues. It will create the U.K. as a coastal fishing nation, or whatever the term is that they use to describe it. The Bay of Granville Agreement, and I know that this is not liked by some in the fishing community, we have used it as a basis for negotiation for our future relationship with the E.U. It is fair to say that, dependent on where these negotiations land, dependent on the institutional arrangements, which are agreed, dependent on the S.P.S. (sanitary and phytosanitary) requirements, which are imposed or which the E.U. wishes to maintain, it does put great pressure upon the Bay of Granville Agreement.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Indeed, thank you. It was cited in a recent article by the *Jersey Evening Post* that the Government of Jersey argue that the U.K. will still be unable to pass laws for the Island without the backing of the States Assembly. How will the Government of Jersey enforce the will of the States Assembly in a situation where the U.K. Government attempts to legislate on its behalf?

The Minister for External Relations:

The question is not a question for me. The question is the other way around. A permissive extent clause would require Her Majesty to make an Order in Council. That Order in Council would be dispatched, it sounds quite feudal, to Jersey through the normal channels. In order for it to have any effect in Jersey domestic legislation, it has to be approved by the States Assembly and registered, as I understand it, in the Royal Court. So I cannot for a minute imagine that, if Her Majesty issued an Order in Council at the request or behest of the U.K. Government that we disagreed with, the States Assembly would approve it. I would not vote for it for one. So we only need another 24. So it would be the case that the Order in Council would have no effect in Jersey. That does not create a problem directly for us. It creates a problem for the United Kingdom Government.

[12:15]

I have been very, very clear with U.K. Ministers that is the case. It is far, far better, as we have always endeavoured to do, to discuss what the implications are of the U.K.'s international obligations arising out of any future trade agreement with the E.U., agreeing together what elements of those international obligations apply to Jersey, and then Jersey giving domestic effect in our own legislation to ensuring compliance with those international obligations. That is the constitutionally correct approach and it is the approach that we wish to maintain. So, even if the U.K. Government does not back down and maintains a permissive extent clause in its legislation, we will still have to go through that other process of agreeing what the international obligations are, then us giving effect in domestic legislation. Therefore, whichever way, showing the pact to be supernumerary.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

The Deputy of St. Mary has a question that leads on from the last, I believe.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Yes. Just to follow on from the constitutional position regarding the issue of an Order in Council. Would the Minister clarify that there would have to be active agreement on behalf of the States to approve it and there is no way an Order in Council can come into effect simply by default of the States of Jersey doing nothing and ignoring it?

The Minister for External Relations:

No. I have tried to argue with lawyers that the Order in Council does not need to be laid by the Chief Minister, the Chief Minister could simply refuse to lay it, and therefore it would have no effect. Lawyers would argue that the wording of the States of Jersey Law means that the Chief Minister has no choice, the Chief Minister has to lay the Order in Council before the States Assembly for a vote.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Thank you for that. You have answered the question which was to be my follow-up. Thank you.

Deputy K. F. Morel:

Before passing back to the Connétable, Deputy Higgins has also asked, which is linked to the last question, whether permissive consent is based on the convention of the constitution or, you have mentioned, possibly the States of Jersey Law. Where does the legal land lie with regard to gaining consent?

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

If I could just join in, what I am saying is, is with the U.K. having an unwritten constitution, many things are based on conventions of constitution, which in times past, certain conventions have been overridden. I am just wondering what the legal standing is of the permissive consent clause.

The Minister for External Relations:

The convention is that U.K. Government would not use a permissive extent clause without the Crown Dependencies' agreement, because there are cases, for all sorts of bureaucratic reasons, that we might want to simply have or use the permissive extent clause to give effect to a piece of legislation. That has been done in the past. That is the convention. Once you have a permissive extent clause and the U.K. Government have asked for an Order in Council, that is not convention, that is Jersey domestic legislation that kicks in and we can vote to not approve it or not give effect to it, in effect.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

In which case the U.K. could try and exert pressure in other ways on the Island Government, is that not correct?

The Minister for External Relations:

Absolutely, of course, yes. We are in the middle of Brexit and we talk about tariff barriers, we talk about non-tariff barriers. There are any number of ways that one party or one country tries to exert its influence over another.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Thank you, you have given me the clarification I required.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

If I can just pick up a little bit further on that, Minister. It seems to me as though there could well be unintended consequences as a result of this. Clearly the U.K. Government will try its best to circumvent little old Jersey if we are not careful. I look forward to you holding the line on that one.

The Minister for External Relations:

Can I say, this is the irony of the situation we find ourselves in, they have no intention of circumventing us? This is sometimes where we are grouped together as the Crown Dependencies and previous actions on behalf of others mean that the U.K. is taking the approach that they are. The Minister has confirmed to me again yesterday that we have never not appropriately given effect to our international obligations in domestic legislation. They are wanting, however, to present a unified position to the E.U. and others have not always behaved in the same way that we have.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

That is pleasing to hear. Just linking to that once again, has the potential impact of the U.K. Government's decision to include the permissive extent clause on Jersey's political and commercial relationships with France been assessed?

The Minister for External Relations:

Has what, sorry, Constable?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

It is really more about the political and commercial relationship with France. Has this been assessed in the light of the decision to include the permissive extent clause? It is not just about fishing, it is about the political and commercial relationship with France as a whole.

The Minister for External Relations:

No, I think France would agree with our reading of the situation, somewhat ironically perhaps. So it does not seem to be having any detrimental effect, because we have stood up and clarified the constitutional position.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Thank you. I now pass to the chairman with regard to the clarity on post-Brexit tariffs and inflation.

Deputy K. F. Morel:

It is not me, it is Senator Moore, but thank you.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you, Constable, and good afternoon, Minister. In relation to inflation, back in 2006 the London School of Economics published a report suggesting that the 10 per cent fall in the value of sterling against a basket of other major currencies resulted in a spike in inflation, costing the average U.K. household approximately £404 per year and £448 per year in lost wages. The report also identified that the costs of inflation were not evenly shared across all regions of the U.K., with London faring best. The question is, Minister, what calculations of the inflationary effect of a no-deal Brexit or a significant shift in the value of sterling will have on a basket of goods in Jersey and wages?

The Minister for External Relations:

Of course, there have been a number of institutions, and I do not have any of them in front of me, like the London School for Economics and other economics organisations. They do not necessarily all agree about the negative inflationary impact on Brexit. There are experienced and respected commentators that think that Brexit can positively affect the U.K. economy. I am not going into that now. The calculations that we have done here is that on a no deal, so no further negotiated outcome

scenario, we could expect inflation to rise by around 5 per cent and then to fall back gradually. The Economics Unit has continued to do its work, together with Oxera. We have a report on that. I had a version sent to me yesterday, which we can share with the Scrutiny Panel on a confidential basis, but that is roughly the number that we are talking.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you, that is helpful. How widely is that information shared throughout the Council of Ministers when they are taking deliberations about other economic and financial matters? For example, we have seen the Chief Minister suggest that he has been considering increasing G.S.T. (goods and services tax) if sufficient money is not raised by the move to current year tax for all taxpayers.

The Minister for External Relations:

I would like to think the Chief Minister's comments were simply comments about levers that might be available to any government. I am not aware of any work that has been undertaken in Treasury with a view to raising G.S.T.

Senator K.L. Moore:

That certainly was not the impression the Chief Minister gave, I am afraid, quite sadly. As it has been highlighted by the Scrutiny Panel, the current position with the move to current year tax for all taxpayers will not raise the level of revenue that it was initially predicted to. One can only assume that the Chief Minister will be looking at those other levers that he talked about quite openly and in a public forum.

The Minister for External Relations:

Of course, it is well-known what my view is: that we should be controlling expenditure and we should come forward with a way to, not in the very short term but certainly in the medium term, have a plan for repaying back any of the exceptional costs arising out of COVID-19. That view was very strongly supported by the Fiscal Policy Panel.

Senator K.L. Moore:

The question really is how widely does the Council of Ministers consider the information that you do have from your Economics Unit and how important, when they are taking their decisions, is the impact on a basket of weekly goods on the families of Jersey, particularly for those who might be struggling with the cost of living already?

The Minister for External Relations:

My view is that Ministers have had sight of the earlier pieces of work. We have more recently pulled together some of those pieces of work. Ministers have and will be having sight of that work. I have

also asked for a further piece of work, so that Ministers can make informed decisions about what might be finally negotiated in regard to tariffs or not, what effect it might have on different sectors of the economy so that they can make an overall balanced decision. The issues you raise are important considerations for making the ultimate decision, if there is a deal, of whether we want to be party to that or not.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you. Are there fiscal stimulus measures perhaps that would be identified and under consideration to help mitigate those effects?

The Minister for External Relations:

If we take fishing, we touched on that earlier, that it would seem absolutely appropriate to use some of the future economy money, which has been allocated in pots in the Government Plan, certainly to support in the fishing sector quayside support for reducing the costs of export, researching and facilitating new market access. A case could be made for potentially other sectors as well using that money to support them in the short term to find new markets, if they find their markets are impacted by those future relationship in due course, if there is no further negotiated outcome.

[12:30]

We have, of course, also spoken in the past about the negative implications of the increase in the cost of a basic basket of goods. Officials are working with the Stats Unit and the previously set-up group that were supporting vulnerable Islanders during COVID-19.

Deputy K. F. Morel:

Thank you, Minister. I am going to pass to Deputy Ward now. He is going to ask a number of questions related to the costs and also students in the E.U.

Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier:

Thank you. I was just going to follow on from the question of inflation and I wonder whether there is any contingency to protect those families who may spend a much larger proportion of their income on food. A 5 per cent increase in inflation across the board ... there is a much larger impact if you spend 90 per cent of your income on food, for example. Are there any contingency plans to protect those families who are disproportionately affected?

The Minister for External Relations:

There are no plans right now, as we sit here, that will just pull off the shelf, if that is what you mean. There are processes in place to monitor the effects, if there is an inflationary effect, to monitor the

price of those goods. Then we have either the income support system in place or we have the processes that we have used during COVID-19 to support vulnerable Islanders in the short term.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Just to press on that, it is the next tranche along, those who do not qualify for income support, for example, families who will see an impact in that middle and lower to middle income areas from an inflationary increase. Is there anything that you think the Government can do to protect against that or do those families just have to take the hit?

The Minister for External Relations:

I would not say they just have to take the hit. Income support is an important first basis to supporting vulnerable Islanders if there is this negative effect. We have to remember we are, of course, right now in an all-time low inflationary environment. The Bank of England are talking about deflationary times as well. We cannot be certain what a 5 per cent increase will mean. It has been said before, and sometimes it is politically divisive, but I personally think that there is work that can be done around competition of various cost factors that an Island community has to encounter. There is good work, of course, as well that the Consumer Association is undertaking with its new app around lowest cost products and things like that. It is not direct intervention in the way that, Deputy, you might be alluding to, but there is a place for this sort of intervention, which Government should be supporting and Ministers can support.

Deputy K. F. Morel:

Deputy Ward, could I just jump in before you move on to Brexit and students? Deputy Higgins had another question about non-tariff barriers.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

We know that tariffs can be a problem and we also know that non-tariff barriers can be a problem. We know the French have been past masters when it comes to this. Has any consideration been given to what they may do or could do and how we can try and ameliorate them?

The Minister for External Relations:

We had quite a lot of conversation around ministerial tables, certainly myself and Deputy Young and officials, about both of these 2 issues. On the one hand, tariff barriers can be perceived as just financial barriers and therefore easy to remove. That is, of course, not the case. Tariff barriers are not easy to remove; you fall foul of all sorts of state aid rules if you seek to do that. Non-tariff barriers, which are around bureaucracy and ease of doing business and checks, probably have the most detrimental effect to business, but are easier for governments to support in mitigating them. We are very aware that both are important to Jersey businesses. If we are concerned about French non-

tariff barriers ... and we all know about the past history and how things can go when they go wrong. Therefore, for us, maintaining good and positive relations with our French colleagues is critically important if we do encounter some of the things which I think you are alluding to. We need to be able to call upon those relationships to help mitigate any disruption.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Right. I will leave it at that, thank you.

Deputy K. F. Morel:

Thank you and back to Deputy Ward.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Thank you. I was going to talk about Jersey students in the E.U. Two of the E.U. major member states, Germany and France, have reinstated a nationwide lockdown recently to combat the spread of COVID-19. What is the current advice for Jersey students in the E.U. in the event of a no-deal Brexit and during a period of lockdown restrictions, which may potentially extend into the New Year?

The Minister for External Relations:

Currently, from the information that I have from Student Finance, we know that that is not necessarily the full picture. There are 22 students who benefit from Jersey government finance who are studying in E.U. countries. The advice that has been given to them is that they must continue to contact their own educational institutions, certainly from a Brexit perspective, around any increasing in fees and around any need to regularise their stay for immigration purposes. That is also, as I understand it, on the website. The question about the collision of this and COVID-19, I do not have that information in front of me this morning.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Okay. Should Jersey students in the E.U. consider returning to the Island before Brexit takes effect, if it is likely the lockdown restrictions in the E.U. would extend further?

The Minister for External Relations:

As I said, unfortunately, and I am not trying to be obstructive, I would not want to give any information out that led to unintended consequences about what students should or should not do. The Education Department, as I understand it, are shortly to publish or make announcements about what their recommendation is for students when considering the Christmas period and what the requirements will be, which have been proposed in alignment with S.T.A.C. (Science and Technical Advice Cell). This is a difficult issue. I do not have the details of what they are. I do know that there have been differing views about looking for accommodation and whether that is appropriate or not

or whether it would just lead to more likely potential spread. Rather than giving out thoughts off the top of my head or misinformation, I will endeavour ... or the panel might wish to communicate with the Minister for Education.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I will end it there, but I would just say that I think it would be perhaps advisable if your officers who are working with you have a liaison with them as well. If there are only 22 students, not a large number, then that is a manageable number to deal with before any situation arises. I will pass on to the chair for the next set of questions.

Deputy K. F. Morel:

Yes, thank you. I am just going to ask a couple of questions, Minister, about product standards. Can the Island expect possible changes to product standards, for example in food and medicines? If so, how quickly might these changes take effect? This is obviously with regard to the possibility of free trade agreements with other countries or the U.K. itself changing its own standards. Will the Government of Jersey be able to sufficiently monitor such changes to key imports of medicines, foods, electrical appliances, et cetera, to ensure they are safe and compliant?

The Minister for External Relations:

Yes. As I sit here, I am not aware of any intention to modify any of those standards. I know that the Minister for the Environment is strongly against any reduction in standards. It is government policy to maintain current standards. We do and we are able to do so, as we have done in regards to products in the past.

Deputy K. F. Morel:

Thank you. One aspect of that is: should the U.K., of its own volition, let us say in February next year, decide to weaken the product standards with regard to kettles, would Jersey still maintain its existing legislation and expect the imports to be of a higher standard than the ones that the U.K. allow? Is Jersey equipped to ensure that at the border we would stop any imports of any such lower quality products?

The Minister for External Relations:

That is a difficult question to answer with great certainty. On the one hand that is what Customs and Immigration do every day of the week. They have their exempt lists, they know what standards are meant to be met. It would seem logical to me that if we moved away from U.K. standards, i.e. current European standards, to any great extent, it would require extra resourcing to maintain a different standard across a wide range of products. Luke, I do not know if you are still in with us? This again falls to you if you wish to comment further.

Acting Director, Customs and Immigration:

Good afternoon. Thank you for asking me to comment. There is not too much more we can do. You have certainly answered the point that day in day out we are looking for compliance in trading standards and safety. However, the customs agreement that the Minister signed a couple of years ago with the U.K. means that we do continue with free trade with the U.K. Obviously standards are outside of that and stand alongside that. What I can say is that the technical solution we have in place can build in certain parameters to items that come in. Clearly some things like that are going to need to be, for the example that you have given, identified through intelligence, through the details that would be provided through the freight data that we get. It is possible to put those controls in place, if that answers your question, but it does require a good bit of work to do that. There would be a lot of reliance on the agreement that we have in place to align our standards to that of the U.K. Not to say that we obviously have our own choice to determine what we want, but that is at a level above me. Certainly we have some capability to manage the control of goods coming in.

Deputy K. F. Morel:

Thank you. Yes, I appreciate that is a political decision that would have to be made should they divert. Connétable of St. Brelade has also asked whether consideration has been given to a speedier approval on non-English packaging, if necessary. In the event, for instance, that our standards and the U.K.'s diverged, and perhaps we might find it easier then to import certain products from the E.U. instead or they may be cheaper from the E.U. and therefore we choose to import from the E.U. instead.

[12:45]

Where are we on the issue of packaging? That is often raised as a problem for importing from the E.U. directly.

The Minister for External Relations:

That is not me as well, sorry.

Acting Director, Customs and Immigration:

Again, it is not something I can refer to directly. A lot of the controls we put in place at the point of importation are on behalf of other agencies, such as Trading Standards. This would be one of those. Identifying it is something that J.C.I.S. (Jersey Customs and Immigration Service) would work towards and do what we could to find if it was considered that it was outside of the requirements that we were looking for and it became a prohibited or restricted item. Passing it on to Trading

Standards we would have to consider whether something is to an adequate level or not is another situation. Again, we have the ability to try and find those items through the work that we are doing.

Deputy K. F. Morel:

It is, I appreciate, a case of wait and see what happens. I do understand that. I am not sure whether this question is better directed at Luke or the Minister. Related is whether the Government is drawing up a list of specific product groups, a watch list, that would include those which they believe were at higher risk of being chosen by the U.K. perhaps to diverge from the existing E.U. standards. Obviously meat is often those that are mentioned. Is the Government thinking about this sort of thing for the future?

The Minister for External Relations:

I am going to put my neck on the line here, because Luke might contradict me. I am not aware of any such list being drawn up. If it is, it is purely from a bureaucratic perspective. The U.K. have been political in how they are trying to approach free trade agreements around the globe. I do not believe that the British public would allow a diminution in standards of food production. There is already a concern in U.K. agriculture that the implementation of E.U. standards is done to a higher level, therefore increasing cost of agricultural products in the U.K. already. There is no way those sectors of the U.K. economy would suffer a trade deal that allowed the importation of cheaper, lower quality food stuffs to flood the U.K. market. We believe exactly the same here in Jersey.

Deputy K. F. Morel:

Brilliant. Thank you, Minister. I am going to pass back to Deputy Ward, who has a few questions about supply lines and our travel links with Europe.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Thank you. I am conscious of time, so I will try and get through these quickly. I have summarised them a little. There have been reports of a threat to British workers of fresh food stocks. Have you identified any risks to supply of locally-grown fresh food from the non-availability of seasonal workers in 2021?

The Minister for External Relations:

No, I am not aware that we have. We are joined on the line by Dan Houseago from the Economy Division. Dan, would you like to add anything further?

Group Director, Economy and Partnerships:

Yes, thank you very much, Minister. It might be in the broader context useful to know that as part of our ... we have a food security and resilience group looking at all aspects of the supply chain. A

part of that involves looking and working with, as the Minister said earlier, local resilience forum and also importantly with U.K. Government departments. This week we received a food security dashboard from the U.K., which seemed to indicate that food supplies were in a good place, as far as food security in the U.K. is concerned. Of course, that is important for us because 95 per cent of our supplies come via the U.K. In terms of the food supply in Jersey, 10 per cent is locally produced, 46 per cent comes from the U.K., 25 per cent from the E.U. and 19 per cent from the rest of the world. We do recognise that there are potentially opportunities to look at developing greater local markets for both agricultural products and fisheries products in the future and making sure that our local producers are making the maximum contribution to our food security, which cannot, obviously, be 100 per cent, but could potentially be higher than 10 per cent. In terms of workforce, there are historically and always have been challenges in terms of workers in agriculture and fisheries. I suspect that in the future there will be a different set of challenges that require us to source labour from where it is available. This is not just about restrictions as a consequence of Brexit. There could be restrictions as a consequence of COVID-19. There could be changes in the dynamics where countries like Poland, for example, start to become better places to live and work for those that historically have come over to Jersey. There has always been a range of challenges around staff. We have always managed to work with, particularly, the Jersey Farmers Union to address those. I would expect that to be the case. We have very good linkages into those industries. Thank you very much.

Deputy K. F. Morel:

As part of the preparation there was an article in 2019. It talked about a Co-op warehouse at Bellozanne, stockpiling 15,000 cases of ambient food goods, whatever an ambient good is. Do you think that the non-Island food supplies do have any additional risks due to the interaction between COVID-19 and Brexit?

Group Director, Economy and Partnerships:

Should I take that, Minister?

The Minister for External Relations:

Yes, if you could, please.

Group Director, Economy and Partnerships:

Yes. Just on the warehousing, we did explore this in previous incarnations of preparations for day one no deal. We believe that, talking to supply chain representatives, there is no requirement to stockpile food at the moment. To some extent there are some risks around the behaviour of consumers in the U.K., because if they start to stockpile then that does put pressure on the supply chain that feeds us. The big risk is around fresh products. Ambient and frozen food is okay, but

there is a risk, but it is difficult to determine because there are a lot of contributory factors to providing fresh product. Having said that, that feeds in quite nicely to options in Jersey to produce those as well. We are looking at it. There is a specific workstream that is looking at food security going forward. There are also specific workstreams looking at how we develop new markets, both domestically and in the rest of the world, and the infrastructure that might be required to support that. Thank you.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Okay. I want to move on with a couple of questions about prescription medicines. Has there been any estimate of the potential increase in the cost of prescription medicines after the Brexit transition period ends?

The Minister for External Relations:

Not that I am aware of, Deputy, no.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Okay. Are there any specific medicines or equipment that are at a higher risk of shortages in the event that supply lines are disrupted by Brexit and COVID-19 and perhaps bad weather all happening at the same time; we do live on an Island.

The Minister for External Relations:

No. Health and Social Services are working together with community pharmacists who are confident that they are sufficiently prepared for the eventuality of no further negotiated outcome.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Okay. Does that include the Condor Ferries discussions about financial support following those things coming together, in terms of COVID-19 and Brexit at the same time, to ensure the regional travel links with the U.K., and therefore supply links, are maintained?

The Minister for External Relations:

With regard to health matters, they are separate from Condor Ferry matters. The Health Department and community pharmacists, as I understand it, are sufficiently prepared and are not reliant on just-in-time supply chains in the way that other parts of the economy are. I am joined also by Darren Scott. I know we only have 5 more minutes. He could just give us a brief overview of the issue that I think you are referring to about Condor and the resilience of that provision.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Yes. It is me trying to link questions together to get through.

Director, Economic Development:

It is an important point. Condor clearly are not dissimilar to airlines and have been enormously impacted by the significant drop in demand for travel caused by COVID-19. Officers from government and Ports of Jersey meet with them regularly to understand their financial position as well as their operational position. There is nothing to worry about in terms of their ability to cope through the next couple of months, this important COVID-19 winter combined with Brexit. There are no concerns on that score. They have contingency plans. They have resilience in their fleet. They have made excellent preparations in terms of preparation for drydocking their vessels early, to ensure that they are all available over the critical coming months. The short answer is, it is an important point but it is a point that we are extremely comfortable on at this current time.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Okay, thanks.

Deputy K. F. Morel:

Thank you. Just very quickly moving on to green cards and travel in the E.U., last couple of questions. Please could you advise whether you have been in discussions with local insurance providers in their role in issuing green cards to Islanders who wish to drive in the E.U. after Brexit?

The Minister for External Relations:

I am not aware that we have been in on any discussions on behalf of Government with insurance providers.

Deputy K. F. Morel:

Okay, thank you. What is the advice to Islanders currently living or travelling in the E.U., who may be in COVID-19 lockdown after the end of the Brexit transition period and who perhaps have not been able to renew their travel or motor insurance remotely or whose policies cannot be renewed due to Brexit and the risk of COVID-19? Is there a coming together of that COVID-19 and Brexit situation where people could be, theoretically, stranded abroad with a lack of insurance?

The Minister for External Relations:

With the way that insurance companies use technology now, no one should find themselves stranded abroad without being able to renew their insurance policy, either online or via telephone. The policies become effective without needing to complete paperwork in the old-fashioned way and sign. One can be on cover by the result of a simple telephone call.

Deputy K. F. Morel:

Absolutely. Thank you. One last question on this subject: is there a procedure in place for Islanders to prove that their vehicles meet the relevant E.U. emission standards before driving to the E.U.? The E.U. is very strict on emissions from cars. Obviously, Island vehicles now will be looked at perhaps a bit more closely than they were before.

The Minister for External Relations:

The obligation is upon the individual to understand their car's cc capacity, if it is an old one and therefore take that capacity, correlate it to the emission standard of the relevant country and if necessary pay the relevant fee or get the relevant licence before they undertake their trip. More recent cars will have emissions data which will be easier to understand from the relevant countries websites.

[13:00]

Deputy K. F. Morel:

Thank you, Minister. You saw the clock strike one as you finished there. I had to miss out a couple of extra questions from Deputy Higgins and Deputy Gardiner, but they can discuss if they want to send them by email. Thank you so much for your time. It has been very helpful. I thank all your officers as well for their time.

The Minister for External Relations:

Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you, panel. If you do want to send any questions over, please do.

Deputy K. F. Morel:

Brilliant. Thank you. With that, we will bring this hearing to an end.

The Minister for External Relations:

Thank you very much.

[13:01]