

3.2 Deputy S. Power of St. Brelade of the Minister for Planning and Environment regarding the establishment of a Coastal National Park:

I welcome the Minister for Planning and Environment back. The Draft Island Plan in its present form proposes, in Policy NE6, on page 95 of the Draft Island Plan, a Coastal National Park; can the Minister confirm the manpower and financial implications that will arise if this proposal is approved and will he clarify whether more staff will be required at the Environment Department?

Senator F.E. Cohen (The Minister for Planning and Environment):

The Coastal National Park is a planning policy designation, and as such there are no cost implications. The designation is proposed by the new Island Plan Policy NE6 and is shown on the proposals map. If approved by the States, and it is only if approved by the States, it will provide a planning policy framework for the determination of planning applications in this area. There is also an aim to further the objectives of a national park to more common land management practises across the area. The draft plan sets out more detail for the development and adoption of a Coastal National Park management plan over the planned period. The aim is for greater engagement and co-operation of the public and private agencies, interest groups, landowners and farmers within the National Park area. This will harness existing resources and lead to a more common land management regime. The preparation of the management plan will be led and facilitated by the Department of Environment from within existing resources, it will therefore have no additional financial or manpower implications for the department as stated in my proposition.

3.2.1 Deputy S. Power:

If I may be allowed to ask a supplementary of the Minister. On the Coastal National Park proposals map, which is 2.4 on page 93, there is a large area along the north coast from St. Martin to St. Ouen and all the way down the west coast, and it includes parts of St. Brelade's Bay and Noirmont. Can the Minister assure the Assembly that with the increase including 2 valleys, that with this increase in area to be proposed as a Coastal National Park - including the outlying reefs - that he will not need further countryside officers?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

As I have just stated, this is a planning designation and therefore we will not be requiring additional officers to facilitate the implementation of the plan should it be approved by the States.

3.2.2 Deputy D.J.A. Wimberley of St. Mary:

Does the Minister agree that it is not really extra resources that are required if we approve the Coastal National Park; what is required is sticking to the guidelines and the rules implicit within the park so that the park is really protected?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I could not have said it better myself.

3.2.3 The Deputy of St. Mary:

Will the Minister undertake to do this if and when we vote for the Coastal National Park? Will there be adherence to the policies within the Coastal National Park designation?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

As the Deputy is well aware, as he has studied the Draft Island Plan very carefully and lodged, I think, approximately 20 amendments, the Island Plan is very prescriptive and will require the Minister for Planning and Environment to adhere precisely to the terms of the Island Plan.

3.2.4 Deputy A.E. Jeune of St. Brelade:

Would the Minister accept that the areas designated should just be left as a natural environment as they are now, not manicured, and not built upon? That is probably the most important aspect.

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I would certainly concur that generally they should not be built upon.

3.2.5 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

Is any special consideration given to applications being currently made which will be constructed, if passed, that will be in the National Park zone?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I am not sure I entirely understood the question, but I think that the Deputy was asking whether current applications will be considered under the new Draft Island Plan. The fact is that while the new Draft Island Plan has weight and can be considered partially in terms of the planning determination, it is not the sole determining factor. Until the Island Plan is approved by this Assembly, if it is approved by this Assembly, it does not have the full weight of the Assembly.

3.2.6 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does that mean then, for example, any applications which are passed perhaps the day before the new Island Plan comes into force, which would be in the National Park will still get the go ahead and we will see perhaps large constructions in the National Park zone perhaps going on for a year or so, while that area is still being designated a National Park?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I certainly hope that is not the case but, in general terms, an applicant has a general right to have his application determined within the planning policies applicable at the time the planning application is received. Having said that, the new Island Plan can be given weight in any determination and indeed the Planning Applications Panel and I have both given weight in determinations recently to proposals in the Draft Island Plan.

3.2.7 Deputy S. Power:

One last question for the Minister: paragraph 2.64 on page 93 of the Draft Island Plan refers to areas within the Coastal National Park to be accorded the highest level of protection in the Countryside Character Appraisal. Could the Minister briefly explain the difference between what is proposed in the highest level of protection and what is the case now in the 2002 Island Plan?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

The principle is simply that by designating and titling the area "Coastal National Park", that it will raise the status of these particular areas and the policies themselves

are fine-tuned to deliver better protection of the Coastal National Park area, that while not significantly greater than in some cases, the protection afforded presently will generally afford greater protection to the area designated. But I must stress that that is, of course, dependent on this Assembly approving the Draft Island Plan.

Senator T.J. Le Main:

On a point of order, Sir, could I ask you a question please? In view of the next question asking for so much detail, could you explain to us how you allow this as an oral question when you keep asking us to keep our responses very short and sweet?

The Bailiff:

The position is that Members are entitled to ask the questions. There is nothing in Standing Orders which says that the Chair can disallow it on the basis that it ought to be an oral question. If there were some questions perhaps would be disallowed on that basis.

[10:00]

Senator T.J. Le Main:

It would be easier for Members to have the answers of the Minister to all the details in this question than done orally.

The Bailiff:

I can well understand your being of that view, and it is up to Members ultimately to try and ask questions that are more suitable for oral than written questions.

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

I was a little concerned that the Senator was suggesting that I was not sweet.
[Laughter]

The Bailiff:

I am afraid that remark passes me by. [Laughter] Just to say to Members too, that the first 2 questions were of course held over from last time so the 2 hours will start from now.