



Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Hearing

Witness: The Minister for Infrastructure

Wednesday, 20th November 2024

Panel:

Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity (Chair)

Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South (Vice-Chair)

Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement

Connétable D. Johnson of St. Mary

Deputy D.J. Warr of St. Helier South

Witnesses:

Connétable A.N. Jehan of St. John, The Minister for Infrastructure

Mr. T. Daniels, Director, Jersey Property Holdings

Ms. E. Littlechild, Group Director, Operations and Transport

Mr. T. Dodd, Associate Director, Highways, Traffic and Infrastructure

[10:34]

Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity (Chair):

Welcome to this quarterly public hearing of the Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel with the Minister for Infrastructure. The date is 20th November. I ask those in the room to make sure that you have switched off your mobile phones and others to make sure we are quiet and ask any members of the public to not interrupt proceedings and leave at the end of the meeting. We have 1½ hours for questions and obviously if we do not get to the end - we hope so - we would like to follow up with questions. First of all, Minister, I would make an introduction. My name is Deputy Hilary Jeune. I am the chair of the Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel.

Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South (Vice-Chair):

Deputy Tom Coles, vice-chair.

Connétable D. Johnson of St. Mary:

David Johnson, Constable of St. Mary.

Deputy D.J. Warr of St. Helier South:

Deputy David Warr, panel member.

Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

Deputy Alex Curtis, panel member.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Constable Andy Jehan, Minister for Infrastructure.

Associate Director, Highways, Traffic and Infrastructure:

Tristen Dodd, Associate Director, Highways, Traffic and Infrastructure.

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

Ellen Littlechild, Group Director for Operations and Transport.

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

Tim Daniels, Director of Property Holdings.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

We have got apologies from the Constable of St. Helier. We can never schedule his diary to be here.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Hopefully in 2025 we will see more of him. Thank you. Minister, first of all I would like to pass over to Deputy Curtis who will start off the proceedings today.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Thank you. Minister, you will be aware that the panel has brought an amendment to the proposed Budget 2025-2028 that is seeking for the insertion into the Budget of a head of expenditure line for the Fort Regent development project. Could you update the panel on progress of the feasibility assessment being undertaken by the States of Jersey Development Company?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Yes, of course. With respect, I think the amendment is probably 12 months too early because we are not in a position at this stage to identify the cost and/or the funding. What we do know is that the States of Jersey Development Company are using up to £3 million, which was retained after the College Gardens project, for design and to get us up to a planning stage. Part of that money will also be used to relocate the soft play area for a period of time. We hope to have the roof design finished by next month and put in a planning application for any works required on the roof. We then hope to make a funding decision by the end of February as to how we will fund the project at Fort Regent. I think I have spoken to you before about the importance of ensuring we have got enough revenue to operate Fort Regent and maintain Fort Regent before we start any work there because I think we have made that mistake far too often as a Government and previous governments, where we do not think about the cost of maintaining a property. Then we plan to go to public engagement in February and March, so get feedback from the public as to what we hope to deliver there and get their input into what they would like to see there with a view to planning applications being lodged by May 2025.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Minister, I think £3 million obviously being within the College Gardens retained profits and being directed to development works from a design and feasibility stage is probably the first time we have heard that number. Of course, your team and the team of S.o.J.D.C. (States of Jersey Development Company) are quite aware of how to cost and schedule design works compared to build costs and there is a very standard industry split between how much you might budget for design versus build. A figure of £3 million sounds quite like there will be a significant requirement for capital on the project. Are you comfortable that spending money on designs to the tune of £3 million will deliver a project that the capital budget is affordable to whoever is paying?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

It is a significant investment in design, which is about half of that figure. Monies have been identified also, as I mentioned earlier, to relocate the soft play, because the plan is to get the full clear and get the work started, so that is really key. That expenditure will be shown in the S.o.J.D.C. accounts, so that is where it will be displayed.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Of course the panel has taken a decision to bring an amendment to the Budget and we were wondering if you agreed as Minister that as a publicly-owned asset - and we heard yesterday from the Chief Minister that it is intended to remain a publicly-owned asset - that there should be a line within the Budget for expenditure on Fort Regent whether feasibility, design or development works.

You mentioned it be too early but do you agree that the principle that we should be accounting for public assets that are not development and disposal assets or investment assets within the Budget and not within our States-owned entities accounts?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

As I said earlier, I think it is 12 months too early. The expenditure, I believe, will be shown in the S.o.J.D.C. accounts. We have commissioned them to do the work. I think I have said around this table in previous panel hearings, or next door, that there is no intention to sell Fort Regent or give Fort Regent to an A.L.O. (arm's-length organisation). We are using the design capabilities and the engineering capabilities of our A.L.O. to get us to a position where, firstly, we can put in a planning application for the roof and, secondly, we can go to consultation with the public.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Last time we spoke about this, Minister, I raised, on behalf of the panel, the question as to the capacity and expertise in the States of Jersey Development Company, highlighting they, of course, are a small team who often contract and consult with other parties. You endeavoured to go and speak to S.o.J.D.C. to understand their internal resources. What is your understanding now of the expertise that they have on this type of project following those discussions?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

We are due to meet with S.o.J.D.C. the week after next but my understanding is they are using inhouse resource initially with some external support but I am not sure of the level of that support. We have used S.o.J.D.C. to help us with the western bus gateway because they do have people there with landscape designs. Is that what you call it?

Associate Director, Highways, Traffic and Infrastructure:

Yes. They have got expertise in landscape architecture and project management and, of course, they have within their own frameworks some traffic and other expertise they have been called in on.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

As in skills that they have?

Associate Director, Highways, Traffic and Infrastructure:

Not internally, no.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Not retained talent, as such?

Associate Director, Highways, Traffic and Infrastructure:

Internally they have got landscape architecture and project management skills.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Okay, as part of their full-time staff base?

Associate Director, Highways, Traffic and Infrastructure:

Yes.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

With previous Fort Regent projects, there has always been some doubt, I suspect, as to which Scrutiny Panel should be involved. The economic Scrutiny Panel was the one involved and again there was some concern that S.o.J.D.C., for instance, is a States-owned entity. The normal procedure would be for the Corporate Services Panel to quiz them on matters. How do you see this going forward given that Infrastructure is going to be very much a part of the arrangements? Would you anticipate that this panel will continue to ask you and ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

More than happy for this panel to ask me and/or other panels. The Regeneration Steering Group, of which I am a member, chaired by the Chief Minister, is where the work gets reported into. The day-to-day work is reported into the Infrastructure Property Holdings team, so I am happy to continue answering questions where I can on this subject.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Okay, that is for a future discussion.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Lastly on this, because we have got a lot of topics today, from my side, is around the public engagement and, of course, the Fort has been through many iterations of designs. We saw from a recent answer to a written question significant expenditure undertaken by S.o.J.D.C. on plans back in 2020, but looking to 2025 and the work being undertaken, what consideration has been given to the format of public engagement?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I hope to find out more detail about that at the meeting in 2 weeks' time, but I think we have identified in the timeline there will be initial public engagement in February and March of next year. I do not know if that will be focus groups, I do not know if that will be questionnaires, Q&A (question and

answer) sessions, drop-in sessions, a combination of all those things. I do not know the detail at this time but we are happy to share that with you as soon as we know.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

The plan is that will be undertaken by the States of Jersey Development Company?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I believe so at this time, yes.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

I note that former consultations published by our States-owned entity often have performed groupings within consultation feedback grouping, both neutral, positive and strongly positive results together when advertising outcomes and that is not, from my experience, a good statistical or transparent way to highlight public sentiment because you may have a lot of public indifferents may object as a few supporters and if you group your neutrals with your positives are you going to ensure when you speak to them that this is about open, non-leading questions and that the public get a say - that is a genuine say - in the future of the Fort?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I totally agree with you. For me it is about getting the best and if you are going to do public consultation you best listen to what the public have got to say otherwise you are wasting their time and your time. So I am sat here with a genuine intention that we are going to do genuine public consultation, so that would be my expectation.

[10:45]

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

A final question on the soft play. You were saying about the relocation of the soft play. Has there been a site identified?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

There is a site identified on the waterfront, so it is in town still, and so that will have to be co-ordinated to avoid school holidays and try to ensure that it is moved at a time when there is least usage so there is less disruption.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

You made a comment there about moving to the waterfront. Have you got a specific site in mind at the waterfront?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I have to apologise. I have been told but I do not know the waterfront intimately so I could not tell you exactly where it is but we can get back to you on that. I believe it is currently a vacant site.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Sorry, just on that, the waterfront's assets are owned by the States of Jersey Development Company and of course Fort Regent is owned on behalf of the public directly by Government. Is there a plan to enter commercial terms with S.o.J.D.C. for any soft play so that we are in essence leasing a site to host to keep clean accounting lines.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

My understanding is that the cost of the soft play is we have to hire a facility for us to locate it, yes.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

We have to pay for that as Government?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Well, yes, although it will come out ... it will be S.o.J.D.C.'s funds from the College Gardens that will fund that.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

The soft play?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Yes.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you, Minister. If there are no other questions on Fort Regent, we will move to the skatepark. Can you provide an update on the project of a new town skatepark?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I can. I should probably say firstly that work on the pavilion at Les Quennevais has started. They are due to finish it in February, I believe. The lights up and running. There was a very successful 2-day event there - I keep forgetting the name - the Bowl a Crock, which I visited and watched in awe of the young man in a wheelchair, which was absolutely amazing, fantastic. I had our French twinning mayor with us and she was totally amazed by the facility that is up there. In terms of the St. Helier park, we are currently seeking pre-application planning advice. That has been going on

for some time. I think we have been dealing with the historic environment team for 4 months. We have met on site - well, officers have met on site - and we expect to lodge an application in the next 6 to 8 weeks.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Could you be clear about the source of the funds for the project in 2025?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Yes. So we will be moving funds to pay for the skatepark. I was given an assurance by Treasury colleagues that we could do that because I have given an assurance not only to you but also to Deputy Stephenson. We met with Deputy Stephenson and we wrote to Deputy Stephenson confirming that we were continuing with this project. I do not know which pot it comes from but I am assured that we have got the funds to do that.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

We have discussed before, Minister, about the need to be flexible within the Infrastructure budget because of things that come up and pop up. Would it be coming from an Infrastructure ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

That is my understanding, absolutely, yes.

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

There is a separate vote for sports money, the skatepark. The money had been pushed back to future years but we have had those conversations with the Treasury that there is going to be a bit of rebalancing so the money should be available next year. If not, then we will reprioritise within the existing capital votes.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

What would you say would be the reprioritisation? What would then not be prioritised if the skatepark goes ahead?

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

It could be something to do within parks and gardens or in one of those areas. We would have to go ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

We may delay an irrigation programme, for example, so we have got flexibility. We want to do everything, clearly, but we are committed to providing the skatepark and that is what we plan to do.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

When you say get pre-app advice for the planning application - and I am not sure if I have missed it or if it has not become public knowledge or whether it is able to become public knowledge yet - where are you thinking to the location of the St. Helier skatepark?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I think we have shared that with you before, at South Hill, on the bottom reversing bay. There is stakeholder engagement with neighbours; there is stakeholder engagement with the people that use the reversing bays. I am not sure where else has reversing bays. The plan is once the skatepark is opened at Fort Regent, that the area will then be able to be used for wheeled activity. We are looking at the potential there to be able to train young people how to ride a bike, for example, with a mock-up street and so on.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

Sorry, just to follow up on that one, is your Assistant Minister aware that that is the location plan for the skatepark?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Yes, absolutely.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

He is. Okay.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you, Minister. The panel notes that there have been calls for better signage and stricter regulations around helmet wearing for children at places like Les Quennevais and other skateparks that are coming. In April you answered a question in the States Assembly that Les Quennevais skatepark signage goes beyond British standards outlining safety guidelines for skatepark facilities. In your view, is the level of safety signage for skateparks sufficient to prevent serious injury?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I have to say I am disappointed with the new signage at Les Quennevais because I thought that the signage that was shared with me by a member of the public with the Constable of St. Martin and other members looked a little bit more interactive. It was a picture and we have got signs up, blue signs saying "wear your helmet", which is a bit prescriptive. I think work is going to carry on to improve the signage, but we are committed to encouraging people to wear helmets when using those facilities.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

What is your view on whether regulations should be introduced to make helmets mandatory at Jersey skateparks? Is that something that insurance, for example, dictates to ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I think it is very difficult. I think I have probably spoken about this before, the fact that the area is not staffed. The Youth Service have people there for good amounts of time but the area is not staffed as is the case with other skateparks and so I think it is very hard to regulate. I think what we need to do is to educate people, to encourage people, educate youths, educate their parents and guardians, but I do not know how you regulate and enforce that regulation. I would much prefer to do it in a co-operative way.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Do you foresee some funds to support within that skatepark, developing the new one, to be able to make the signage clearer, the information clearer but also with the youth workers who are there to be able to educate a bit more and work with charities and partnerships?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I am not responsible for youth workers, so I cannot comment on what they do or do not do. Certainly we are going to do better with the signage. As I said, I was personally disappointed when I went up to view the signage, so we will get that better. We will carry on engaging with people who have an interest in that. I visited Guernsey's skatepark last year and was very impressed with the safety they had there. They had somebody running a little café and inside at the back of the café they had helmets, they had skateboards, they had knee protectors, elbow protectors. That facility was manned and with restricted opening hours, I believe, but it was a lot smaller than our site. To try to manage our site with one person I would say is very difficult.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Is that something that would happen with the development of the pavilion? Would there be a space where ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I think it is more of an opportunity for people to shelter, for youth workers to talk and for youngsters to talk to each other. I do not think there is any plan currently for refreshments to be sold.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you. Moving on, Minister, can you provide the panel with your understanding of the scope of the Deputy Chief Minister's Project Breakwater in terms of its overlap with your Ministerial remit?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

The Deputy Chief Minister is working on a project, reporting into the Regeneration Steering Group, which I mentioned earlier. The project remains in development. We have got officers from our operational team and our sports team working with colleagues. Until the scope of the project is agreed by the Council of Ministers, there is no budget or funding mechanism in place at the moment but I would welcome additional investment in infrastructure and/or sporting facilities.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Coming back to that question, understanding the scope, how does it overlap with yours? What are the areas? I suppose you need to have that understanding ahead of going to the Council of Ministers where decisions would be made.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

We are still in a scoping stage at the moment. We need to make sure that Jersey remains a place where people want to come and visit, where people want to live, people want to invest in, so we have to invest in, I call it, our product, basically. I would describe Jersey as a product in that instance and we have got to keep investing in that product. There is a lot of work being done in the background and I talk to the Deputy Chief Minister, officers talk to colleagues, and I think as soon as we have got something that is ready to bring to yourselves and other States Members, we look forward to sharing that with you.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Would you not say, Minister, that that product of Jersey being ... and I suppose we are talking about infrastructure and the public realm and all those elements that are under your Ministerial scope, would you not think that the project would be more for the Minister for Infrastructure to take on?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I think initially the project is broader than that and I think if we agree to do areas within my ministry then clearly I will be responsible for those areas but at the moment it is a scoping exercise. It includes a whole range of different things. I do not know all the detail but I am quite excited by some of the things, but equally the challenge will be how do you fund this. If we make additional investment, how is that funded? That is always the challenge.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Just to understand what you have seen as a member of the Regeneration Steering Group and Council of Ministers, this is a project that is under scoping. It has, in essence, an accountable Minister, from what it sounds like. Are you aware of how it crystallised, it started? Was it the signoff by the Chief Minister himself in a decision; was it announced in the Council of Ministers? It appeared, as you say it is in development, and I guess the panel is interested to know how did that inception occur? What have you seen to give you assurance that, from your side, because it sounds like it would still have a lot of Infrastructure elements, perhaps, it started on solid footings of governance?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

It is an area that we have discussed at both Council of Ministers and the Regeneration Steering Group and I have also had discussions with both the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister. We have spoken about the need to invest. We have had to make some tough decisions for this Budget. The public realm, for example, we had hoped to spend £5 million next year and currently it is down to £2 million and I think people want nearly £4 million in amendments taken out of the £2.5 million, so those numbers will not work. I think we need to work on what would be included, what would not be included. We have got aspirations for sporting facilities, for regenerating existing sporting facilities, but there is an enormous amount of work to do before we get anywhere near a formal proposal and a review of how that formal proposal would be funded. I think we can spend too much time looking at our boots. We have got to look forward at the horizon and see what is coming and it is a combination of both. So it has not impacted on the work that the department has done. The team have worked, as I said earlier, operationally and the sports team with colleagues and continue to do that.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

The understanding from the panel is that Fort Regent and, as you have mentioned, some of the public realm projects are within this scope. Could you tell the panel how this aligns with S.o.J.D.C.'s feasibility assessment for Fort Regent and with ongoing projects on the public realm? How does that fit in?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Well, what we have got to do ... sorry, I perhaps have not done it very well. I have tried to explain that. The work that S.o.J.D.C. are doing at the moment is the early design work. If we are going to invest in the product of Jersey that has to include Fort Regent. I have made my point very clear time and time again but I will repeat it. We have to have a plan for revenue that if we build something we can maintain it. That has got to be the way we go forward. We cannot keep building things without having a revenue line in the Budget to maintain those things.

[11:00]

So Fort Regent is included in that. Its sporting facilities are included in that. The level of detail is still to be discussed and decided but that work is ongoing. It does not impact on the work S.o.J.D.C. are doing. As I said, the R.S.G. (Regeneration Steering Group) have got a meeting in 2 weeks' time I think it is.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

Just a question, the thing that is striking me is your budget is constantly under pressure and constantly being cut. Do you think public realm investment is being taken seriously by Government?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I am hoping that the Assembly will take public realm investment seriously next week when we debate the Budget. I think we have underinvested in some areas, there is no doubt about it, and I think we have spoken about the timings of doing some works. My personal preference is I would not have done La Motte Street when it was done but that has happened and I have to say walking down La Motte Street last week, because we could not cycle, it looks really good. If you look at Halkett Street where we did a joint project with the parish of St. Helier, it looks really good, and I think we have got to do more of that. I think in terms of we wanted to spend, invest £5 million, we have agreed to put a £2.5 million cap on that for 2025 and so that is significant investment but I clearly would like to see more. Equally, I have got to make sure I have got money for the drains, for the waste, all those things, so we have got to cut our cloth, David.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

I get that and probably my follow-up question to that is one about you talked about the parish working with Infrastructure in terms of the funding of Halkett Place. Do you see more of these kind of shared investments, these shared ways of funding things? If your budget is constantly under pressure, surely there has to be other ways of looking at how you ... you talk about cutting your cloth but how do you make the cloth bigger and what kind of partnerships are required?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Yes. We are very keen, where it is appropriate, to do pound-for-pound matching with the parish because Halkett Street was a strategic priority for us. We have got other strategic priorities which we would be very keen to work with the parish on. We want more people in St. Helier living and working and so we have to provide an environment which people want to be a part of.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Minister, when you were talking you said about ... you have mentioned, and it is true, several times in different hearings about the need for generating revenue to make sure that the assets that are being developed are maintained. Does that mean within Project Breakwater that is focused on only assets that will generate revenue? Of course, for example, health does not necessarily generate revenue.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

No, it does not. I use Fort Regent as an example. I, like many Islanders, can remember Fort Regent in its heyday. I spent a lot of my youth there and it is tragic to see what has happened. We have seen plans for £250 million to be spent there and nothing has happened. The plans at the moment are much more achievable, in my opinion, but those plans need to include ways of generating revenue so that that facility can be maintained and kept up to date.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Does that mean Project Breakwater would not have assets from the health estate, for example, because it would not be able to generate the same kind of revenue as sports facilities?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Project Breakwater will include a whole range of ... could include a whole range of things which could include facilities that generate revenue and facilities that do not generate revenue. So, it is not decided what is in and what is out. You would need to speak to the Deputy Chief Minister if you want more detail today because I am here, I am engaged with the process, I am supportive of the process. Additional investment in infrastructure, whether that is public realm, Fort Regent, sporting facilities, I welcome all of that, but it has got to be deliverable and we have got to have a way of funding that.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Of course. I think that is where, I suppose, the panel is questioning ... that, is of course, behind all these developments of this potential vision, that hopefully we will get more information soon on, needs that ... of course, the infrastructure behind it ... later we will be talking about the liquid waste, for example, or we have talked in the past about roads. They need to be funded too, so it would be interesting to see whether this becomes separate budget streams and it takes away pressure on the infrastructure. If you are talking about Fort Regent sports facilities, et cetera, that also does fit under Infrastructure and the Infrastructure budget, it would then, I suppose, take away that pressure and put it in ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Well, there is always going to be pressure but it would alleviate some of the pressure and it may mean that we can deliver some things quicker than we had anticipated. At the moment, we are almost on the eve of the 2025 Budget debate. We have had to cut our cloth accordingly. We spend far too much, in my opinion, in some areas. My job is to ensure that we get investment in our infrastructure, and that is what I have tried to do while being part of a team and clearly recognising the importance of health, for example, education. That is why, for example, we are only spending - "only" spending - £2.5 million on public realm and not £5 million on public realm. I would like to do much more, but ...

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

So Project Breakwater, in a way, is innovative investment ideas for potential projects that are already in train or already projects that are current tier. It is not new things that will then be an added burden on ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Well, it could be a combination of both. I am aware of the areas within the infrastructure, I am aware of all areas that may or may not be included, but I think we should be encouraging looking further ahead. Politics is a short life cycle and we do not spend enough time thinking about the future.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Before I go on to my set of questions, back to funding. The Comité des Connétables on Monday had a presentation by the C.E.O. (chief executive officer) of the States of Jersey Development Company on the waterfront and assured us that the proposals were at no expense to the taxpayer and were done within their budget. You did mention that the AquaSplash comes within the overall project, but that is not within their budgetary remit, so presumably that will fall on Infrastructure, will it, to ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Currently, we spend a significant amount each year on the AquaSplash. I think there was one proposal to replace it. I think the current proposals are to enhance, refurbish and enhance the facility so, yes.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

So that is within your own remit and you are aware of that and will budget accordingly?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

That comes out of the sport funding.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

The sport fund, okay. Well, I will let that other panel deal with that. Although as you mentioned sport, the 1 per cent allocated to sport, are things like that going to be offset against that 1 per cent?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I believe we spend more than 1 per cent on sport and I was expecting potential for an amendment to the Budget for 1 per cent on sport, but that did not materialise, but I firmly believe we spend more than 1 per cent of our annual budget on sport.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Okay, I will leave it at that then. I think there are more questions which another panel might want to deal with. Yes, on to my own topic really. A few general questions on Jersey Property Holdings, if I may. The first general one is, could you please detail how J.P.H. (Jersey Property Holdings) or its procurement and tender process on matters being undertaken by J.P.H., a general question as to ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I do not know the day-to-day detail. Tim will be able to help you with that.

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

I think it depends on the scale of the procurement. There are different values that set different levels of process, all of which are determined by the Public Finance Manual and the commercial team within the corporate organisation. Depending on the scale, it depends on whether we go to a tender process or whether there is an appointment of a panel or ... as I say, depending on the scale and the scope of whatever is being done, there are procedures and processes that we adhere to.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Okay. On the tender process, for my information, is there a ceiling or a basement figure?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

There is for right across government you have got to apply to the Public Finance Manual. I presume that is the same for ...

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

Yes.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Do you know what that figure is?

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

There are steps and stages. I think I will probably be safer to send you the detail rather than recount it and get it wrong, but it is something like 2,500 million.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Okay, that is fine. All right, okay.

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

But there are other steps.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Okay. Leading on to a more specific question then, you may say it is the Public Finances Law which limits it, but what is your policy regarding the use of external consultants when selecting tenders and materials, or is that again within your ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

We are absolutely striving to reduce the use of external consultants, and I think it was at the budget meeting that we had, or maybe the meeting before that, we discussed that. We have got a number of framework agreements which are still running on. So a framework agreement is where there is an approved contractor who is on a list of approved contractors and that we are able to use and we are constantly reviewing that. I think Property Holdings and the rest of the department are still using external resource where it is needed. But I think there has been significant improvements in that and I am looking forward to an update on that, which hopefully we can share with you as well.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Okay. What you are suggesting, therefore, is you are reducing consultants where possible. Will that affect the overall performance of ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

That is the balance, David. We have got some - and you have met some of these people - fantastic engineers. We have got fantastic people all around the place, but they have only got a certain amount of capacity and when we do not have the capacity or the trained people, we have to use external resource, I think that is the case. We have recently seen that at Havre des Pas where we have used somebody from our framework agreement to provide advice. That is the case today and will be the case tomorrow, where when we do not have in-house resource or in-house capacity, then we have to use external resource. But believe you me, I think the message is well and truly received from across the department that I am not a fan.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

I think the public as a whole have got that message, if that is any consolation to you.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Yes, but we have to balance. We have got work we have to do, so we cannot stop doing everything, but there is this balance. I was delighted to hear on Friday that we are less reliant on consultants for our consultation with Planning. That was a positive thing to hear on a Friday afternoon for me.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Thank you for that. Moving on, if I may, to the Lido. Can you outline what changed in that situation from your early comments as to vacant possession to the extension, I believe we have now, of the present tenancy until the end of 2025?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

As far as I am aware, it is until Christmas Day on 2025, as opposed to 31st of December. I think that date is important because the Loi - I think it is 1919 - the appropriate notice had not been given, we were advised, having been advised many times that we had given the appropriate notice. So it was felt that we needed to just get on with it and sort it out. We are out for expressions of interest. I think, to date, we have had at least 4 expressions of interest, genuine expressions. That process finishes at the end of next month and then we go into more detailed work with those parties if they wish to proceed. So we are trying to move forward. I understand there was a positive meeting on Monday afternoon with the Assistant Minister and members of the Lido steering group. We are looking to find a solution.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Sorry, I think my question was really that, originally, I had understood that vacant possession was imminent; now it has been given to the end of 2025. Are you saying that is because of revised legal advice on that or what?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

It is advice we ... you know, we have got to be fair and if we have not done something that is correct or other people do not think it is correct, we have to think: "What is the point in going into litigation?" Spending money legally, there is no point. For the sake of 12 months, just get on with it. Sometimes you have got to make pragmatic decisions, have you not, whether that is as a politician or in life.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Okay, right. Does what happened with the Lido affect your thinking for future processes with regard to this? Will there be a different process in future?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I have bought a pair of braces to go with my belt. **[Laughter]** I think you always learn, do you not? You always learn. We are in an expressions of interest process at the moment and we look forward to working with the parties that have expressed an interest.

[11:15]

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Just to understand how the process went, when the current tenants were issued their vacancy notice, had legal advice been sought then to make sure that everything had been in order with the law of ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I think we should be looking forward rather than backwards, but in essence there has been no lease, no utilities paid, no rent paid since I think February 2021. We believed that that enabled us to gain vacant possession. We offered a licence for the summer because people had booked events for the summer and we had to think of those people. I still believe that is the case. However, pragmatically, there is this Loi ... I think it is 1919. Have I got the date right? So that is why Christmas Day is important because my family were evicted on Christmas Day when I was a young boy, because our lease had expired and we had to leave the farm we lived on, on Christmas Day. So I am very familiar with Christmas Day. The pragmatic solution is to issue a lease and I will repeat here, it will be a Government lease signed by the tenant. It will not be the tenant's lease signed by the Government. Hopefully we can conclude that today or tomorrow ...

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I think where the panel is trying to ... I understand you are saying to look forward, but with the Connétable's question about changing processes in the future and making sure that the department is not put in this situation again, I think what we are trying to establish is was legal advice sought around all those issues that you were saying that there were ... it was an interesting situation.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I would like to assure the panel, I have not been doing things off the back of a cigarette packet. I have been seeking advice every step of the way. I was in the U.K. (United Kingdom) attending my stepmother's funeral. That is why I was not in the States Chamber for the debate, which did not

happen. You know, I am a pragmatist. I was on the phone to colleagues and fully support the decision that was taken.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

You may already have answered this question, but it was really to ask whether in the life of your experience with the Lido, are there any wider changes that you feel should be made to the way in which J.P.H. manages its relationships?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I am a bit mixed up in terms of our last hearing or the hearing before, but I think I have told this panel before that we are looking at how we manage property and estates, because clearly we have got to do it better. That is not a reflection on the people that do the job; that is a reflection on the resource we have got. We need to focus on what I describe as our core business and we need to look at doing things differently. I think I mentioned to you last time that the school S.L.A.s (service level agreements), for example, were due to be signed at half term. They have not been signed yet. What we have had is some positive meetings and I think they are due to start being signed this week or next. But we have had some positive meetings and the output of that meeting is that we are going to meet regularly with that group of tenants once or twice a year to talk about how things are going. So we are always learning, we can always improve. We have got far too many buildings that we do not fully utilise. We work hard as a team every fortnight looking at what is happening with those and we are starting to make some progress and see some light at the end of the tunnel.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Thank you. Reverting specifically to the Lido, can you outline the maintenance works which will now take place at the Lido and whether the responsibility for the maintenance lies with Jersey Property Holdings Ltd or the tenant?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

The tenant will have some responsibilities, but the major works that are currently taking place are very much the responsibility of Jersey Property Holdings. The C.C.T.V. (closed circuit television) was operational from 1st November, although we have got a request access to view that C.C.T.V. We are looking at how we can do that remotely in the future. Tim, do you want to say anything about the current work?

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

Yes. There are some redecoration works that are ongoing but there is also, given the nature of the public amenity and its age, works to the pool retaining wall - the capping, the footings of that - to stop it leaking, and the sluice gates as well. Again, bearing in mind that it is a Victorian structure,

the focus is very much on maintaining its functionality. The redecoration work is depending on the weather. We are hoping to get it done before Christmas but it may roll over into next year. The works on the pool retaining wall, again, will finish early in 2025. As I say, those are aimed at maintaining the facility as a community function.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

So all these works relating to what I call the seawalls, they are all within the responsibility of Infrastructure and you are carrying them out?

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

Yes.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Thank you for that.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

Can I just ask a clarification on that point? Are you saying the seawall improvements taking place currently at Havre des Pas form part of the overall budget of £500,000 or is the £500,000 separate to that? Is that a different ...

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

It is all part of the same budget.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

It is part of the same budget, it is the same £500,000. Okay, thank you.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Can I add, just for an extra bit of clarity, we have seen photos of diggers and works happening to the seawall at Havre des Pas rather than the retaining wall ...

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

That is not us.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

That is not you?

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

No.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

That is another project?

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

Yes.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Okay.

Associate Director, Highways, Traffic and Infrastructure:

There are 2 things that are going on. One, we have ongoing programmes of maintenance to our sea defences that protect the town and the mainland Island and then we also have strategic works that are planned for that. The Lido sits, among others, separately.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Okay, and those are 2 separate budgets?

Associate Director, Highways, Traffic and Infrastructure:

Yes.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Okay.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

Sorry, that is not what Mr Daniels just said. He has implied that the £500,000 budget is actually for both seawall and Lido. You are saying: "No, there are 2 different pots of money."

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

Apologies, that was a misunderstanding.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

Okay.

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

I thought you were referring to the wall of the pool.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

No, I was talking about the seawall itself.

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

That is a separate budget.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

It is a separate budget. Okay, thank you.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

That is all on that seawall. Getting away from the Lido, Jersey Property Holdings and its portfolio generally, you have referred to you are trying to get it better managed. Is it set up properly to enable you to carry out the function you think it should carry out?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

The Chief Minister and the Chief Executive asked this question yesterday, and I think they both agreed that it was not. I am working with them to try and find better ways of doing things. There are improvement opportunities, no doubt about that, in my opinion. Being a Minister is not like being a chief executive. You are responsible for the bus but you are not driving every day. Perhaps we will talk about buses after, but it is very different. If I was the chief executive, there would have been lots of change introduced in the last 9 months. I am not the chief executive of Property Holdings, I am the Minister, so what I have got to work is on the strategy and the policy, and that is the work that I am undertaking. The team do the day-to-day management of it.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

That is an interesting comment, because some of the States-owned properties were set up for that very reason and enabled Executive decisions to be taken without going through the Assembly. Are you suggesting ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I will remind you of the point I made last time. Property Holdings is 19 years old, no service level agreement with tenants in 19 years. Now, there has been some terrific work done this year, both by Jersey Property Holdings and the team at C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills) to rectify that. But why has it taken 19 years? That is the level of challenge that we have got. People are doing their very best each and every day and we should give them credit. During the last week, I have seen the work getting done at Bel Royal toilets, West Park toilets, the Central Market. We have got banners up to say "Jersey Property Holdings". We do not tell people how long the works are going to last, what work we are doing, how much we are investing, and that is a simple explanation. The same could be said, I am sure, for Havre des Pas. We should be telling people

what we are doing, why we are doing it, how long it is going to take. There are some very quick wins that we can do and the team are working on those quick wins, but each and every day the team come in and do their very best.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Not to criticise your team; it is the actual structure of the unit.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Yes. I think I have told this panel more than once that I am working on how we could do things differently and, in my opinion, better. I will of course update you - hopefully at the next meeting - with what that might look like.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Last question, Connétable. We need to move on.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Yes, sorry, okay. Le Squez youth centre, we note that a feasibility study has been completed on this. Will it remain valid in 2028 when the project recommences?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I think it is important to say ... I think that the *J.E.P. (Jersey Evening Post)* today suggests that the programme is ready to go. It is not ready to go at all. Le Squez is currently at feasibility stage. There are still detailed design works to take place and planning approval has neither been sought nor given, so we would not be able to spend £2.5 million next year because we would be going through that process. Going back to what we can actually do in the time we have got, Le Squez currently has a youth facility. Yes, it needs some attention and in fact, tomorrow afternoon, I am visiting Le Squez, Samarès School and Highlands College, because I was horrified when I saw the photographs of Highlands College, absolutely horrified. But we have had to make a decision as Council of Ministers that, with all of the development in St. Helier, the priority and the funding we have got available to us needs to provide a youth facility in St. Helier. We need to do some work on Le Squez to make sure that it is welcoming. I think we can do some work with the team at Le Squez to try and get more access to F.B. (Florence Boot) Fields, for example. We need to try and find a way of helping the youngsters there, but they have got a facility. We need to make sure it is tidy, but we have to invest the money we have got. We have to make choices. They are difficult choices and C.Y.P.E.S. have chosen town, and I fully support their decision.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Minister, on that, how long will it take? St. Helier youth centre has not gone through any of the stages yet, I assume. It is starting from the beginning. What is the timeline looking like? We see Le Squez, for example, getting to a feasibility study, but I believe that has taken a couple of years to get to that point. Realistically, are we ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Sorry to interrupt. I think it has taken longer than a couple of years to get to where it has got to. I think you can go back to Le Squez probably 4 or 5 years and see that it has been spoken about.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Exactly, so what is the St. Helier youth ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

But there is no detailed ... I will remind you, there is no detailed design, there is no planning approval and ...

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Absolutely understand, but more about a realistic understanding of how far we are going to get in this term of Government for the St. Helier youth project. Where will it get to within 2 years? Understanding that and seeing a very similar proposal at Le Squez ... and as you have just said, it has taken a number of years to get to. How far will we be seeing anything going forward with the St. Helier youth centre?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I would need to come back to you with the detail of that, but the work is under way with Le Squez. The team are working with the town and with the Property Holdings team.

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

It is driven by the people who are going to operate it and use it. So, the process is driven by C.Y.P.E.S. stating their requirement and understanding what it is that they want from the site. We are supporting them as much as ... we are providing architectural support and project management support, in terms of how you put together that project.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

So it is at the brief stage? I know that you were very helpful in providing us with the different stages of a project, going from concept to a build. At the moment, it is at the brief stage within the department. You will then need to be doing a feasibility study.

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

Exactly.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Therefore we can see, as with Le Squez, that potentially this is not ... it will get planning permission by 2026–27?

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

I do not have the specific timeline, but we can get that to you.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

It would be great. Thank you very much. We need to move on, so Deputy Warr.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

Thank you. This is about inland flooding. One of the concerns that the panel highlighted in its review of the proposed Budget was that it felt there was a lack of funding for contingency planning. The Budget does provide for shoreline management and sea defences improvement, but there seems to be less focus on inland flooding. Would you like to make a comment about that?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Yes, we have done quite a lot of work on inland flooding and only yesterday I was at a presentation with both the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Treasury and Resources, looking at potential solutions for one area of the Island.

[11:30]

I think it is worth noting that each of the parish magazines this month - or the winter additions - will have a full-page advert advising people of what they can do, and what they should not do, to help, because there are a lot of things that landowners can do themselves.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

Would you like to give an example?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Absolutely. If you look in St. Peter's Valley, you will see that the brook there has been cleared and a super job has been done. There is land on the Island which has not been touched for over 20 years and which contributes to the flooding and localised flooding. Just by a simple ... I say simple, I do not underestimate what you need to do, but by land management, more can be done to prevent

flooding simply by unblocking gutters and downpipes. You can ensure that you get water flowing, maintaining your watercourses. Equally, when there is a flood, we want to encourage drivers not to race through that standing water because the impact it has is it pushes the bow wave into people's properties and when you go and visit people who have been flooded, it is not a nice experience, as you know. Some of that is preventable, so we want to try and encourage people to do that. We also want to remind people that it is against the law to blow leaves from your property out into the road, which then in turn can go and block a drain. So we are trying to educate people. I would like to see this happen every year, where we get that information out to the public. It is a first attempt. I would like to see more graphics and more information, but we can do more. In terms of Grands Vaux, for example, we have done some terrific work there. We cannot rest on our laurels, but we have done an awful lot since the incident almost 2 years ago.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

Thank you. Next question, are you content that sufficient funding and emergency planning is in place should there be a sudden flood event?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I think I have spoken in the past about how we have to respond. Before we came in here today, I was told there may be snow in Jersey tomorrow, 25 per cent chance of snow tomorrow. Guess who will be out there if there is, sorting the roads, et cetera. It will be this team. There is an element of money in the budget for weather events. We think that we can do more. I do not know if you have had the briefing from Steve Fitzgibbon on flood defences, sea defences. He is presenting to the engineers group tomorrow evening, which I am delighted to say sold out. So there is lots of work going on. We are working with partners, be that parishes, Jersey Water, to try to find solutions and we have got some interesting solutions. We are also, again ... I will use that word. We are using some external resource to check some of our findings, which is an appropriate thing to do. So there is some really good work there. The Minister for Treasury and Resources and the Minister for the Environment are going to meet with myself and the team again in a couple of weeks' time at Bellozanne so they can see the telemetry there, which covers the whole Island. There is some terrific stuff, and I think you have been and seen that stuff.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

Yes. That is fine, thank you.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Liquid waste.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

Yes, I am going to go to liquid waste. Liquid waste, now, a fun topic. Minister, can you provide the panel with an update as to when the First Tower pumping station project will be completed and what is the spend to date?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Good question. I do not know the spend to date. We hope the work will be finished in the next week or so for the rising main. The actual project is due to be completed by December. Only last week I visited the tunnelling that has been done at Victoria Avenue, which is a part of the solution for splitting the surface water, so that was really good to see. Ellen, do you know a figure off the top of your head?

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

I think it is around £1.4 million for relining the works, but I can get back to you.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

That is fine, thank you. In line with the Bridging Liquid Waste Strategy, can you tell the panel what is the next major project for work that will be progressed and when will it start?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

We have got work which carries on. We are in the process of doing the Bonne Nuit sewage treatment works and the Mont Mado extension, which I should say was all in train before I became Minister. It was not a result of me being a Minister. St. Peter's will be our big target for the first piece of work. That is an almost £8 million investment. We are in the final negotiation, I think, for the land and we expect to go out for tender in January.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

Is that to do with the new development happening in St. Peter? They are linking and enabling that part of it?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Yes, it is enabling. There are 2 pieces of work. There are the strategic storage projects ... have we given these guys a presentation?

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

This afternoon.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

After this.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Oh, right, okay. So you will see Tom who will explain all the detail to that, and then we have got the network upgrades so we can get the product from the homes to the storage and they are off again.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

Thank you.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you, Minister. We will move to Deputy Coles.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Thank you very much. We received a briefing at the end of the Assembly last week on the single-use vapes and the restrictions that are coming in. Please can you explain perhaps the rationale for the ban?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I come at this from the impact of them being disposed and thrown away and us having to manage that. That is where we come at it from. I do not look at it from a health aspect. For me, it is the impact of them. I think Jersey is not alone in bringing forward this legislation. I think the U.K. and Guernsey are both almost aligned to us in terms of the timing. I think it is really important that we do this. I suppose I am more conscious of it now, but I see these things everywhere I go. It seems to me every time I go in a shop there, they are refilling the display cabinets. When we see the amount of young people using these things as well, it is a real concern. I am told it is a £10 a week difference. It is £10 a week cheaper on average to use a refillable vape versus using single-use vapes, so there may be some benefit for users as well.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Can you explain why the existing single-use plastics legislation has been chosen as the vehicle to enact this ban?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

We have taken advice on that and the advice was the quickest route to make the change was to use that law. I think there are other things we could do with that law, but what we do not want to do is to delay the introduction of this piece of legislation by adding to. But I think we should consider in the future: "What else could we do in that area?" Officers keep talking to me about plastic knives and forks, for example, but there are other things as well.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Do you see any future risks to amending this piece of legislation based on single-use plastics for this purpose? The panel notes that manufacturers are already redesigning single-use vapes to find ways that they may not apply within this ban.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

The very introduction of vapes is a result of what has been happening with other products in the market and I am sure the value of the market will see further investment in how do you find a solution to get around it. So we are trying to solve this problem at this time. I do not underestimate the investment that companies will put into fines, workarounds, and we would urge people in the meantime to dispose of these things properly and safely, not to stow them in hedges and on pavements.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Are you aware of any intention on the part of Ministerial colleagues to alter other legislation which is relevant to the regulation and sale of vapes and nicotine products? Do you anticipate any future widening of a ban and how would this be achieved?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I have to say I am not. If I should be then I apologise, but I am not aware of any.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

No, it is just good to know, because obviously there are health impacts with regards to nicotine products and obviously how they are ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

What I should say is the Minister for Treasury and Resources is looking at the potential for taxing vapes going forward, and Public Health is exploring the options of a legal framework around vapes. So I am, moving ahead, aware of that.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

That is good. What steps will Government take to ensure that retailers and consumers are aware of the new restrictions?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

We have already done some consultation ahead of bringing forward the legislation. There is a 6-month period where people will be able to dispose of their stock, if they can prove it was purchased before the legislation comes in. We will have to work hard, particularly with suppliers, to help them.

I think that is the thing. This is not about making people break the law. This is about encouraging better behaviour.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Has any consideration been given to implementing a take-back system so that single-use vapes which have been purchased prior to the ban coming into force are recycled rather than dumped, should the stock have been more than that 6-month allowance?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I do not think we have considered that. I am not sure where we would get the funds for that.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Moving on now to recycling and food waste, can you provide the panel with an update on recycling and if there have been further discussions on the development of a uniform recycling process across all parishes?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I think it is fair to say that progress is slow, or slower than we had hoped. In fact, the Assistant Minister tells me that there was a discussion on Monday at the Comité des Connétables about recycling and parishes have asked for a longer lead-in time for us if we were going to remove any bring-back sites. So we are just going to start some further discussions around that.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

That is a possibility, is it, Minister?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I am not going to make a promise, Constable, but we have heard ... we have also heard from members of the public how they enjoy using the facility. You know, we have got 9 parishes that do kerbside recycling and pay for that through their rates. We have got 3 parishes that do not offer kerbside recycling, do not contribute towards bring-backs. So, is that fair and equitable? Probably not, I would suggest. But we have got a lot more work to do. The head of recycling, I forget what his title is, but he has been out meeting with Constables and I am due an update with him shortly.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you. Because of time, we will probably send some more questions related to this area to you later.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

That is fine.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

So moving on to La Collette headland, what is your understanding of the permission that is currently in place for the height of the hazardous waste mound at La Collette?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I think we are still waiting for the permit for the change to La Collette. I think we are still waiting on some of the planning obligation agreements to be finalised. We did have the support of the Planning Committee back in the summer, but I do believe we are waiting on the finer detail.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you. What plan is in place for dealing with the situation in which receipt of waste would breach the current permission?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

We have just signed a new contract for both inert waste and - also worth mentioning - we have signed a new contract for metals, both of those after a thorough tender process. We think that will help us in terms of reducing the volumes. We are also looking at how we reduce ... and I think the Planning Panel, one of the things they spoke about was increasing the cost of hazardous waste to try and dissuade people from generating it. There is always the balance to make sure that if they do generate it, it is handled appropriately, so we are looking at how we can do that with the teams.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

What discussions have you had with developers on the impact this may likely have?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I have had little discussions. I did attend a Construction Council briefing at which the topic of La Collette and waste was discussed, but unfortunately I had to leave to attend another meeting. But officers gave a presentation the same day they presented it to the Construction Council and Members on the I.C.E. (Island Construction and Engineering) programme.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

You mentioned a new contract with potentially recycling of waste. Will you be announcing the operator soon? Has it been announced?

[11:45]

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I do not think it has been announced. I think we are in the final throes of negotiating the contract. We are in discussion with the preferred bidder and those people that were unsuccessful have been notified.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

How much of the inert waste produced by the demolition of Overdale hospital has been recycled?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

If you would have asked me that last week, I could have given you the figures, because I had them in a briefing I was given. I was quite impressed with the level of recycling that has been done on site, and if you go to Overdale you can see some of the product that is still there. We can get back to you with those figures, because I know they are available.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you very much.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Minister, the panel does routinely ask for the capacity of, obviously, approved permission and perhaps pending permission, and I wondered whether you have in your pack today or one of your officers would have the latest update? I know other Members who are not on the panel have asked questions to those answers, but obviously an up-to-date knowledge on that would be ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Of course. Yes, sorry, I do not have that.

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

For hazardous waste for the eastern headland, at the moment with our estimates of the material that is coming over the weighbridge, we think we have got 10 years. What we are doing, we are waiting for that advice as well from Planning of what their expectations are of us, of what else can we do to minimise that and extend that life longer than 10 years? As the Minister has mentioned, that could be looking at increasing our charges, working with the developers to make sure that they are recycling as much of that material, or making sure that that material is not getting taken out if it does not need to.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Sorry, that 10 years is regarding ...

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

Hazardous waste, yes.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

... what you applied for back in 2023?

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

Yes.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

But not what is currently approved from earlier in that year, which was obviously a retrospective permission because, just back to the Chair's point there ...

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

The approval in September, from the approvals that have been given for the eastern headland, our estimate is 10 years.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

So is that to the height of 30.5 or 35?

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

That is to the height of 30.5.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

30.5.

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

Yes.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

You have got 10 years.

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

Yes.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Okay. So you do not see a risk that there will be a breach of any permission, as the Chair said?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I think what we are trying to do is get the planning obligation agreements agreed and signed off, but we can come back to you with the data. Probably Ollie will, yes.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Do you feel that the developers, though the Minister was not there in the discussions around the Construction Council, took on board the issue and want to be able to recycle and to use other facilities as well, to try to reduce that? Has it been taken on board? Have you seen results, facts, discussions?

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

I think there has certainly been some really good conversations. Certainly for our waste team, we are getting a lot of requests for advice when they are filling in their waste plans and stuff, which they need to do as part of their planning applications. They are certainly seeking my team's advice for that and seeing what they could be doing, so I think that that has been really positive.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I note that we crushed approximately 12,000 cubic metres of rubble on site for reuse in the development of the acute facility at Overdale and recycled more than 4,000 cubic metres of materials from the site, preventing unnecessary landfill. Thank you, Tristen.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Deputy Curtis to carry on with energy.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

We are going to move on to energy strategy. Minister, could you provide the panel with an update as to the preliminary discussions you are having with the Minister for the Environment on the development of an energy strategy?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Well, it is the Minister for the Environment's area. I do work with him in that area. My responsibilities are the Gas Law, the E.R.F. (Energy Recovery Facility). I think I have spoken to you before about my intention to get a framework agreement for solar panels on our Property Holdings buildings and also we are responsible for the use of energy within those buildings. The new office building, which people are moving into as we speak, is of the highest standard and won an award, I believe.

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

It got the Briand(?) ... forgive me, it is either excellent or very good, but it is the highest rated environmental award in the Channel Islands at the moment.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Yes. So I expect us to be spending more time and energy, and I think, as the Minister for the Environment responded recently to Deputy Gardiner, that this work is scheduled for next year.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Okay, brilliant. We have 40 minutes left so we need to be quite succinct, but focusing on one energy source in particular, could you provide the panel with an update on the conversations that you have had with Island Energy around the Island's gas infrastructure network?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Yes, I have had several conversations face to face with members of the leadership team at Island Energy. I have not met the new person in charge, but I met the predecessor. There is some good work being done in terms of catching up - I would use the term "catching up" - with the premises that no longer receive gas. So I think there is some good work being done, but I have not had an update in the last 3 weeks on that.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Are you planning a meeting any time soon with the new C.E.O.?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Officers have regular dialogue with the team, but yes, I would hope to meet them before Christmas.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Okay. And from your conversation with past leadership, what understanding do you have about their plans for the network and service in Jersey?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I think they have demonstrated ... the work that they have done ... if you live where the Chair and I live, you will be aware that they have been working for what seems like months in one specific area, but they have invested significantly in bringing people to the Island to help them with their network, and we welcome that investment.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

Okay, so we will move on to the bus contract. I am going to whizz through a few questions here. How does the new contract compare to the previous arrangements in terms of scope, funding and service levels, specifically with regards to sustainability and meeting the Island's net zero goals?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

We are in the final throes of agreeing the bus contract. We announced our preferred tenderer recently, but part of that bid was to ensure that we got closer to our goals and I think the successful bidder had the best roadmap, if I can use that term, to getting to electric double-deckers and renewable fuel on other vehicles. The plan is for a phased approach, but we should have no vehicles over 8 years from year 2 onwards, and I think that is really encouraging. In terms of the financials, I think there will be an appropriate time to talk about the financials, which is perhaps not today while we are still in discussions with them, but we are encouraged by the offer. We are looking at additional services. I keep talking to you about the Town Link. The growth in the last 2 months has been slower because of Bath Street being closed, but next week the bus operator restarts promoting the Town Link. But overall this year we have seen ... it is now down to 54 per cent growth, the first 8 months of the year was 74 per cent growth, so that is significant numbers. A lot of those people are seniors and/or disabled, so over 24,000 journeys have been made by people who are either senior citizens or disabled, so that is really encouraging, and 23 per cent of the journeys are made by youngsters, so that is also encouraging. Those youngsters hopefully will become bus users of the future.

Associate Director, Highways, Traffic and Infrastructure:

Also, bus use is very seasonal. It peaks in the summer and always drop off in the shoulder months.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

Drops off in the winter, yes.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

We will be promoting the Town Link for Christmas shopping, because now you can get a through ticket you only pay once and so you can reach all parts of town. The other thing we are doing for Christmas shopping, not bus-related, but we are reducing the payable hours at Charles Street car park from 10.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m. We have seen how it has gone and so we are going to try 8.00 p.m. Hopefully that will work.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Sorry to deviate, but does that change require a Ministerial order to make, given that fees are set by the Minister in order ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I signed a Ministerial ... I do not know if it is a decision or an order. I think it is a decision, rather than order.

Associate Director, Highways, Traffic and Infrastructure:

Ministerial decision to change the parking. But there is a quick way of doing it, which is formalised later on.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

It starts next week, so I think there is a week's lead-in time, but I signed the decision yesterday.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Okay, but that is a change to the parking charge order or is there a different legislative ... it is just an interesting ...

Associate Director, Highways, Traffic and Infrastructure:

Sorry, it is to the times, not to ...

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

To the times?

Associate Director, Highways, Traffic and Infrastructure:

Yes, and that is easier to change.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

I am just going to ask one final question. This is a combined issue and this is around ownership of assets. Are you able to confirm whether LibertyBus owns the bus fleet and, if not, who owns the vehicles?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I have to ask Tristen if it is a parent company or if it is ...

Associate Director, Highways, Traffic and Infrastructure:

The way the bus contract works is slightly different. Government underwrites the lease purchase costs in order that the company can get sovereign debt-type rates of interest. Part of that agreement is we have got step-in rights over those vehicles. So if anything untoward happened with the contract, Government could step in and take over the fleet, those that are still under hire purchase

agreements. Where a bus is fully paid up, generally towards the end of its serviceable life, then that is owned by LibertyBus or CT Jersey.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

Okay, thank you. That is great. It just leads me on to about assets and how we manage and own assets. The panel notes the various models for owning and managing different assets. The Budget proposes purchasing and owning, for instance, the office rather than the main government building, rather than continuing a tenant model. Is there an overall strategy for asset management and can you elaborate on what that strategy may look like?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

My preference would be to buy it.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

Okay.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I am not sure I would have entered into the original agreement, but I think the first opportunity we get to purchase it, I think that is the appropriate thing to do, absolutely appropriate thing to do. I think it really would depend on the facility. Sometimes it is more appropriate to rent or to lease. It really depends on your appetite for depreciation. But the new office building I think is absolutely first class. I do not know if you have had an opportunity to visit yet, but it is absolutely first class and I think we will be in there for a long time, so I think it is absolutely appropriate ...

Deputy D.J. Warr:

The question is more directed about attitude in terms of strategies to different types of assets that the Government owns. There is not a standard model.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I do not think Government is any different to business. Sometimes it is appropriate to lease things, sometimes it is appropriate to own things. I think the general preference would be to own things if it is for a long term, but there are times when it is more appropriate to lease if it is for a short period.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

Okay, all right. I will pass you over for the last couple of questions.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you, Minister. Just coming to the end of our hearing for 2024, so a question to you is: what do you consider to be your main achievements to date?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

That is a very good question. I think something we had to do was La Collette, that we have just spoken about. I cannot take any credit. But the bus tender, I think, has been run exemplary and I pay tribute to those people involved, the same people also involved in the inert waste and the metals. I think we have seen significant improvements in some areas. I should have thought about that question, really. But I would pay tribute to the team, as I try to do every time I sit at this table. You are going to have a presentation shortly and it is first class, absolutely first class. We will have spent what we predicted to spend in terms of capital programme for the year - I am assured of that - by the end of the year. That does not mean to say we have been out on a spending spree in the last few weeks. It means it has been planned and I think I have told you before how we review that. I cannot take credit for anything. I would put all the credit to the officers.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you, Minister. What do you consider the immediate or most important priorities for 2025 and what would be the challenges?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Well, I would say next week. The Budget is critical because, as I said earlier, we have got £2.5 million allocated for public realm and people want to take £3.7 million from £2.5 million. My hope is that the Assembly will support the much-needed investment in our product in the public realm and allow us to get on and do the job that we are here to do. I would expect to leave Property Holdings in what I describe as a much better position than when I arrived, so that would be my focus for next year, as well as identifying the paper plates and spinning the china ones.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you very much, Minister. We have come to the end, exactly on time, of our hearing.

[12:00]

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Thirty minutes early.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I had it at 12.30 in my diary.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Oh, I had it ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Do you want injury time?

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Fantastic, well we do not have any questions further than that, but it would be nice when I was saying to some people: "Should we shorten your questions?" So I apologise, we are 30 minutes early, but we only have a few questions that we would need to ask, so maybe we can go back to the recycling and waste, if Deputy Coles wanted to have any more. Otherwise, I think we can just send a few questions to you, Minister, and that would actually finish our thing.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

If I could ask one question, Minister. We have accelerated through a lot of questions today and you have been very keen to support your teams and you have spoken very openly. Is your plan to see that trust in the services your teams provide and that that visionary part, moving forward, is amplified and delivered in 2025 and beyond, transparency, openness, and engagement with your team in a really positive way?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I have to say, that is how I try to do things. It is not always possible, that is for sure. But I have offered you briefings and visits and I will continue to do that because you are engaged with us and we want to engage with you, because I do not have all the answers. I am doing my best, very ably supported by the team we have got here. I look forward to working with you next year. Hopefully I will be carrying on doing this job because I enjoy it. There is lots to learn, but we have got some fantastic people. We can always improve, all of us, myself included, and that is what we strive to do, is to keep being better.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Can I just ...

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Yes, of course. The Vice-Chair first and then the Connétable.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Thanks. Just while I have got the Director of Property Holdings here, and it was a discussion we have raised earlier in the year, tenancies for market traders. Has there been any progress on that scenario that you can give us?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

There has and, again, it is an area that the Assistant Minister is leading on, but both the Assistant Minister and I met with market traders last week. We have ambitions to give people 9-year leases in the market and we expect to write to them again this week. So we believe we are getting very close.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

J.E.C. (Jersey Electricity Company) have announced an ambitious project updating their network and it more than occurs to me that that has got to involve a major upheaval of all roads. To what extent are they involved with you in planning that?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I do meet with colleagues from the Electricity Company, but we have not discussed which road is going to be dug up when, and I answered a question to Deputy Coles last week in the Chamber. The teams do liaise closely with Tristen's team, and it is not only going to be public roads, it is going to be by-roads as well.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

I am aware of that.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I think there will be probably as much, if not more work done in by-roads, because it seems to me it is going from substations to properties, and I think they will have as much if not a bigger impact on the parishes. But there is the monthly J.U.R.F.(?) meetings ... is that what it is called?

Associate Director, Highways, Traffic and Infrastructure:

The initial bit. Yes, there is a joint utilities meeting where people would discuss that. Major projects like this merit special consideration because the project can create a bow wave and so you can work out how you fit the other projects in around it and behind it.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

St. Saviour's Road is a good example of a road that really needs to be resurfaced, but we know there is a lot of work still to be done in St. Saviour's Road. So it is important that we finish that work

before we actually invest in resurfacing that road. You can go on to the Government website and you can see resurfacing plans to 2030 of the roads that we plan to resurface and ... micro-asphalt?

Associate Director, Highways, Traffic and Infrastructure:

That is correct, yes.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Micro-asphalt, which is not the same as resurfacing. What the micro-asphalt does is it prolongs the life of the structure of the road. The team are doing some good work there. The Esplanade, which was done in half term, I think it was, it causes disruption, but when you see the level of work and the speed they did the work, I think they completed it 48 hours earlier than expected. So, some good stuff there.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Yes, you touched on the point. I appreciate the upheaval to the main roads, but parish roads, you have got 12 parishes going to be ... they will have their own ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Yes, I think it may be worth you inviting ... this is probably not under my remit, but it may be worth inviting the J.E.C. to a future Comité meeting to discuss their plans. All of those will be done under TrafficWorx, so they all have to have approval of the Roads Committee to take place at the time they ask for. But it would probably be worth getting an update from the J.E.C. at a future Comité meeting.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Thank you for that, will do.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

If there no more questions ... I know there was a few little questions that we skipped thinking about the time, on the bus contract and also on the recycling, so we will probably send those to you, but they were minor questions versus those that were actually asked. We would like to thank you, Minister, and your team and officers for attending today.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Thanks, and can I thank you for your genuine engagement over the last 9 months. Somebody asked me about Scrutiny today and I said I enjoy it. I do.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Got to try harder next year. **[Laughter]**

[12:06]