

STATES OF JERSEY
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
BLAMPIED ROOM, STATES BUILDING

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<u>Present:</u>	Deputy Rob Duhamel (Chairman)
	Senator Ted Vibert
	Deputy Gerard Baudains
	Senator Jean Le Maistre
	Deputy Phil Rondel
	Deputy Bob Hill

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EVIDENCE FROM:

Jersey Landowners Association

on

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EVIDENCE OF MR ALAN LE FEUVRE, MR CHARLES LE CORNU
and MR HARRY BAUDAINS

(JERSEY LANDOWNERS ASSOCIATION)

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Welcome. Before we start, I have to read you a warning notice. It is important that you fully understand the conditions under which you are appearing at this hearing. You will find a printed copy of the statement I am about to read to you on the table in front of you.

Shadow Scrutiny Panels have been established by the States to create opportunities for training States Members and Officers in developing new skills in advance of the proposed changes of Government. During the shadow period the Panel has no statutory powers and the proceedings are public hearings and are not covered by Parliamentary privilege. This means that anyone participating, whether a Panel Member or a person giving evidence, is not protected from being sued or prosecuted for anything said during hearings. The Panel would like you to bear this in mind when answering questions and we do hope that you understand you are fully responsible for any comments you make, but don't let that put you off.

We have had your submission and I think there was a letter from Mr Le Feuvre and in your submission you said you would like to request the opportunity to meet your panel and discuss these points in more detail. So I thought we would give you an opportunity at the outset to talk to us about whatever you would like to talk to us about.

MR LE FEUVRE: Thank you very much for agreeing to see us in the first place. As you are probably aware, the Landowners Association is recently formed and still in the process of being completed. The main reasons for its formulation is the rapid downturn in land requirements for Jersey Royal and the Jersey cow. We have got a conservative estimate that in the very near future there could be up to 9,000 verges becoming vacant.

As Mr Harry Baudains -- you may have read his article in the paper -- referred, rental income by landowners is really looked upon as a pension and has been and historically land was always considered to be a good investment and an asset, but in fact now has become liability. A large proportion of the land is owned by families that have for generations a farming background and really for that reason their appreciation and love of the land goes very deep. They certainly don't want to see the land neglected and abandoned.

The three points that we have raised with yourselves have the support of the Landowners Association public meeting, with representation really of landowners throughout

the whole Island and not any given area. Frankly, we feel that, unless the States of Jersey do more than pay lip service to preserving the land and the environment, the countryside could become and appear neglected in the very near future. You have only got to look at what happened to Guernsey 20 years ago, when pre-war glass was abandoned and things were allowed to look neglected. It didn't enhance the beauty of the countryside. Frankly, where the landowners are concerned, without income from rent, they will have difficulty in maintaining land clean and tidy and weed-free.

The Landowners Association themselves are looking at a number of ways to assist landowners, particularly OAPs, because of health or otherwise, and certainly widows that are left with the ownership of land, trying to help them to find ways of assisting the economic undertaking of maintaining internal hedges as well as road branchage. We are also looking (and admittedly we have not looked in any considerable depth), but we are looking at low production cross crops to keep the land in use. Obviously, the first thing would be to establish a market requirement for any of these crops, and by that I was referring to crops like barley, sun flowers, oil seed rape and renewable energy possibly, but there is a lot of work to be done along those lines. That is basically a brief introduction to our concerns.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Okay, thank you. Bearing in mind that this scrutiny is based on evidence, or supposed to be, your point (c) under the letter, where you state that "*it is envisaged that up to 9,000 verges could become vacant in the near future*", we had a submission from the JFU this morning and they didn't quite put that figure on it. 9,000 must be, what, between a quarter and a third of the total land that is being used.

MR LE FEUVRE: It is about 25%, I suppose.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Between a half and a quarter, yes, yes. I think the impression that was certainly given to us this morning was that it wouldn't be of that order. So could I ask you perhaps for how you have actually estimated that it could be as much as 9,000?

MR LE FEUVRE: Well, basically, as you are probably aware, the export tonnage requirement for the Jersey Royal is, at best, around the 20,000 tonnes. Well, if you convert that back into acreage, it highlights that they are certainly not going to need the amount of land that has been historically in potatoes. The same applies with cattle. As you know, there has been a move in recent months, in the last 12 months, to export cattle out of the Island. So the number of head

have reduced considerably. So we are basing it on that and we, frankly, don't see a growth, a re-growth if you want to put it that way, in increased land use for the two major established crops. That is how we came to our conclusion.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Right. Before I open it up to the rest of the Panel, I have one question. Had the funding gone ahead for the proposed Agri-Environment Scheme, would that have been sufficient, in terms of the benefits that were being proposed, in terms of part payments on specific environmental performance? Would the whole scheme have been big enough, if you like, in order to guarantee the types of outcome that your organisation has recently been set up to look for?

MR LE FEUVRE: Are you referring to the scheme that was mooted two years ago?

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Yes.

MR LE FEUVRE: That was never established. Well, a lot of water has passed under the bridge since then and, frankly, I don't remember the specifics of it to be able to comment. Maybe my colleagues can. I don't remember the financial implications of that.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Okay, right. Any questions from the Panel?

SENATOR VIBERT: I just wondered whether Charles wanted to comment on that?

MR LE CORNU: No, I can't really elaborate on what Alan said on that. All I can say about the ... Alan has obviously made the outline of the concern of the Landowners Association being formed and obviously because we are so concerned as to the whole future of agriculture. It has only got a future if you have got people involved in it, obviously, and young people coming through; and where are they? Where are they going to come from? There is such a limited number of young people in it and we are forever hearing of people who are giving up and are no longer wish to continue. So, when we are talking about this area of verges being vacant in the near future, it may not be as such right now, but it is certainly going to be in the future.

I know full well ... okay, I'm not involved in farming like I used to be, but very concerned about it. I am a landowner and there is going to be a lot more land vacated simply because people do not wish to continue in the growing of potatoes and less and less cattle. As far as the cattle, it obviously has been a forte of mine in farming. I can't envisage ... like in our parish there is only two very small people. There is one in St Ouens and in the very near

future there won't be any at all. So who is going to occupy all this land? Obviously that is our main concern about it and, you know, we have obviously got, as a responsible Island of tourism and what-have-you, who is going to look after our land, and this is the very important aspect and this is why we as landowners have got together concerning it. There are a lot of other aspects obviously to mention as far as lets and rents and all this sort of thing, but, you know, it is a great concern.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Senator Vibert?

SENATOR VIBERT: I wonder if you could explain to the Panel how your situation is basically any different to people who own property or flats and, if the demand for flats drops, therefore their rents drop and, therefore, the public have a benefit? I am just wondering how you see the position of a landowner as being any different to that.

MR LE FEUVRE: The way we look at it is that the knock-on effect, if you like, and hence my reference to States Members and the House paying lip service to wanting to support the farming industry, particularly with an emphasis on the environment. The consequences of the differences are that it will fast become apparent that land is being abandoned and neglected visually. Whilst I can't disagree with you that the housing market is tightening up, there is still a market for housing and flats even at a price, so they are getting a return. We are talking about a situation where land is not required at all, so there is no rental income. It is not only a question of a lesser rental income.

SENATOR VIBERT: The Panel faces the difficulty because a Jersey Farmers Union have actually told us something totally opposite. What they have said is that, in their view, there will nearly always be farming on good land in Jersey.

MR LE FEUVRE: Yes.

SENATOR VIBERT: And the type of land that is likely to fall into this situation is the marsh land.

MR LE FEUVRE: The marsh land.

SENATOR VIBERT: Which is actually difficult to sustain in agriculture. So we are facing two very conflicting viewpoints here. Now, we understand that you will come from a position where the cheaper the rents are on the land, the greater advantage it is to them.

MR LE FEUVRE: Sure.

SENATOR VIBERT: But it is a dilemma that we have to face when doing our report, that the position you are putting is totally the opposite really to the position the JFU have given us.

MR LE FEUVRE: I don't believe it is. I don't think we are disagreeing with the Farmers Union. Quite obviously it is the marginal land that is going to be vacant and available. I won't disagree that the best land will be used, particularly for potatoes. There are certain elements in land structure and location which are conducive to potatoes and, yes, that land will continue to be required. It is the marginal land, but that doesn't ... frequently the marginal land is very visual. It is close to the coasts. It can be stony. It can be sandy. It is very visual and can be seen by the general public. That is the land that we are concerned about.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: I think this was a point that was made. The indication is that, if you did have marginal land on the northern coastal areas and it actually reverted to heathland or whatever, was there any environmental or visual kind of disbenefits providing nature kind of took it over sensitively and you didn't get too many noxious weeds or whatever.

MR LE FEUVRE: Yes. I think that is an optimistic view. A field that has been cultivated does not return to heathland overnight.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: No.

MR LE FEUVRE: In the interim period, you get a lot of gorse and brambles and noxious weeds, I can assure you. It is not as easy as it sounds. While I personally have got no problem at all, and I think it is a road that has to be investigated, hence what we are doing planting up woodlands, I personally own land overlooking St Peter's Valley, which is ... the shape of the field is a figure 8, which is in practical terms. I mean, I would love to see that go back to woodland, which obviously was cleared historically to create a field, but it is a question of economics at the end of the day, and I don't think one can ignore the economics. Can I afford to plant trees on this land?

SENATOR VIBERT: Can I continue on this?

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Yes.

SENATOR VIBERT: When you suggested that there was an opportunity for alternative crops, such as barley, etc, I mean, were you taking into account the fact that farmers may not wish to farm there, or are you thinking in terms of the Government providing some form of aid which would direct them to this particular area?

MR LE FEUVRE: Possibly, yes. I think I suggested that indirectly in one of the comments I have made. Certainly if we went down the road of oil seed rape and sun flowers for renewable energy, one would be looking for Government support, even if it was as simple as not having tax as you would on the conventional fuels. That would make the economics of the exercise so much more viable.

SENATOR VIBERT: Do you mean crop specific? The subsidy would apply to a particular kind of crop?

MR LE FEUVRE: Sure, sure.

DEPUTY BAUDAINS: I was just going to come in and say I would like to clarify really what you consider your description of “marginal land” to be, because the previous definition we have had is the coastal areas and near cliffs and a field that somebody might walk across to get to a cliff path or something. In my own personal perspective I would also include other land which the members of the public might well describe as just an ordinary field. In fact, I know of one or two in the Parish of St Clements at the moment. Would you also not consider that the possibility is going to increase with those sorts of what the public would call ordinary fields actually becoming unrented?

MR LE FEUVRE: Indeed. I would agree with that. Concentrating on the potato producers’ side, they are using very large equipment nowadays and they want fields of a certain size. So if you are looking at a two or three vergee field as an example, they are not that keen on working it. We know of instances where the potato farmer has said “Well, you know, we are quite happy to take the bigger field but really we would rather not have the small fields.”

DEPUTY BAUDAINS: But there are good quality fields included.

MR LE FEUVRE: Indeed.

DEPUTY BAUDAINS: This is what I’m driving at. It is not only fields of poor quality.

MR LE FEUVRE: No, indeed.

DEPUTY BAUDAINS: Thank you.

MR LE FEUVRE: Unfortunately those could be dotted anywhere in the Island because of their size and also shape, of course, because if I mentioned the field of the figure 8, it is not very conducive to productive cultivation if you have got odd short turns and corners.

DEPUTY RONDEL: So, therefore, if I can come in, therefore the sandy soils, you

mentioned sandy soils -- Le Moye and St Clements and those type of areas -- where you have good quality soil and you have water at hand, but the fields are only two or three verges in size and you may have a block of eight or ten of them, they are no longer viable as such in the industry.

MR LE FEUVRE: That is the impression we are getting and, yes, I would tend to go along with that.

MR LE CORNU: If I may come in, there is a lot of land that is coastal that was cultivated years ago, but they were an important aspect of one's early potato growing, but they are not cultivated nowadays, they totally abandoned it. There is total overgrowth and one comes across these fields time and time again. A concern that one really has, you know, is it is in the heart of the Island, like our parishes, like the parish I come from, St Lawrence and St John's and what-have-you. We have got good land, good productive land, but it is not early land. It is not for the early potato crop.

So what is going to happen to that land? Okay, people are going to come out of farming and such and youngsters and so on. It has been happening over the years and this is why we have established an association to represent because, sadly, the landowners have had no representation. We are very concerned as to the whole future, but, as I said previously, what future have we got if there are no youngsters coming in it? So this land is going to become abandoned. That is important to the beauty and the protection of our Island.

Now, we are all getting ... okay, there are three of us here this afternoon. We are still young men, but we are not getting any younger, that's for sure. Yes, I think Alan has got a son, okay, involved, but I have certainly got no family. Although I have got three grown up daughters and what-have-you, I have nobody to take over the farm. We have been farming the farm at Six Roads for over a hundred years and it is going to end with me. Who is going to take on the land? This is the concerning factor. You know, we obviously have looked into the whole future of the thing and it is concerning all round. You know, it is like your hedgerows, your branchages and all this sort of thing and it is a matter of great importance.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Deputy Hill?

DEPUTY HILL: Yes. Just to expand on that, because you mentioned earlier on about what was an asset is now a liability, and I think we have all got sympathies for you because most of us have got roots in farming. You know, I can understand the issue there, that, you know, you

have had an income coming in and now you are not getting that income and you have also got a liability because you have got to keep the fields clean.

MR LE FEUVRE: That is right.

DEPUTY HILL: You have got to keep the hedges cut and also, I think another issue, which has just been raised with me and I am sure it has been raised with you, is the issue of the rates.

MR LE FEUVRE: I am pleased you have raised that.

MR LE CORNU: We were going to coming to that.

DEPUTY HILL: It will be a little while and I will leave you to come on to that presently. But how do you see the way forward, because I think, as Senator Vibert said earlier, there are houses that have got to come down. We have had a boom time and the houses were up there and now, of course, people are starting to get realistic and land is the same. There was a time when you could ask 100 a vergee, 200 a vergee, 300 a vergee and had some chaps fighting over it and it was never ending.

MR LE FEUVRE: Sure.

DEPUTY HILL: So how do you see the way forward, because although you have got an asset, you have the land, but it is not of any value, so you would expect either yourself to take on the responsibility for looking after it -- and I do share your concern, obviously because there is a difference between a property and land because property, within reason, will always have some value, but land will have no value once it becomes into weeds and gorse land and everything else -- how do you see the way forward yourselves, and is it with Government support? If so, it has got to be some form of partnership. Would you accept that?

MR LE FEUVRE: Well, thank you for raising it, Deputy Hill. Our first point, obviously, is the anomaly and we think it is a serious anomaly of the Parish Rate. Whether this Panel can have any influence on the future of that, but since the new Rating Law came out the consequences are quite serious. You know, the cost per vergee is not phenomenal. I think it is the principle of it. In the first instance, I think we have got to accept that Jersey, to our informed knowledge, is the only place in Europe that is actually paying rates, any sort of rates, on land. So that in itself is wrong. But what is adding insult to injury now is since the law has changed. Historically, if you owned land and for any reason at all, on 1st January if you did not have a tenant, that following year you didn't pay any rates. Now, as the owner of the land,

not only do you pay all land now, the parity, which is a fair ruling, there is no discrepancy from one parish to the other, it is all rated at about £80 a vergee, which, as you are probably aware, one is fortunate to be getting £80 a vergee and usually considerably less. But when you get your rate bill as the owner, you are paying occupiers and owners, which, to me, is totally wrong. That is an oversight which, when the law was passed, which I don't think as landowners I don't think we appreciated the consequences. So when you have land that you are getting no income at all from you get this double whammy bill when the parochial rate bill comes in.

The other aspect is as far as if ... when the Environmental Law was brought in and the future -- I am going on to the point too that I have raised and perhaps not explained it clearly enough -- but my understanding was that two years ago, when subsidies or aid to the industry was debated in the States, it was agreed that the export subsidy would no longer exist and they wouldn't encourage volume and recompense the grower and that any aid to the industry would be with an environmental hat. That was my understanding of it. I felt that if the States were serious in ... or rather the Association felt that if they are serious in wanting to protect the environment, then this is an issue that could be looked at, but not necessarily a bona fide export farmer or a farmer in his own right, but a landowner could benefit by this environmental support which would help to defray the expenses of things like branchage and maintaining the land weed-free. That basically explains why we brought in that particular paragraph.

DEPUTY HILL: In a sense, without being unkind, but you have become paid gardeners, to look after the land.

MR LE FEUVRE: Well, indirectly that is what it amounts to.

DEPUTY HILL: I am using "gardeners" as maybe a loose term. I think you get the gist of it.

MR LE FEUVRE: Sure.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Your colleague, Mr Baudains, is sitting there at the moment. It was reported in the evening paper, saying that, amongst the aims of this new organisation, your particular organisation wouldn't be averse to or unsympathetic towards using the land for sporting purposes or golf courses and the like. Within the document that was agreed by the States and the House the other week it has a stated aim under "*Rural Initiatives*". The question I would like to pose is would you see these rural initiatives, i.e., sporting initiatives,

sympathetic to the aims of an Agri-Environment Scheme or not?

MR LE FEUVRE: We would actually, rather than see them neglected. Yes, we would favour that. On that same subject, you see the Department ... well, it is not the Department of Agriculture any more, but if you have land that is not required for the potato industry or cattle, at the moment you have got to go through a complicated process -- when you have got tenant's horses, for example, which, to me, is livestock -- and it is a regulation which, under the present circumstances, is outdated. Those are the type of, you know, bureaucratic issues that one has to deal with.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: And presumably, allied to your comments about the rating system, presumably your organisation would be prepared to pay higher rates if you had a more commercial type of usage on particular land, whether that be for the person who was renting it or whether or not you were running it as an owner business.

MR LE FEUVRE: Well, frankly, the question of rates I think is an anomaly which is unfair to either the actual active farmer or a landowner. I don't think we should have rates on land, for the reason I explained, that nowhere else in Europe has rates on land and certainly the export farmer has to compete.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: I was under the impression -- and perhaps somebody can correct me if I am wrong -- that, particularly in France, you were rated, but according to the type of crop of the type of use to which your land was put.

MR LE FEUVRE: I am not aware of that.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: No?

MR LE FEUVRE: No.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: But, in either event, your position with your organisation is that you feel quite strongly that no rates should be applicable to any landowner?

MR LE FEUVRE: That is what we believe, yes.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Okay.

DEPUTY HILL: May I just add on to that, if I could, Rob, that possibly the pitching at £80 is unrealistic because, as parish officials, the parish will be expecting their rates to be met by some means and we have an asset and it is in danger, so if the £80 were made £25 a vergee, it might be a bit more acceptable. It might be a bit easier to digest.

MR LE FEUVRE: I think if you analyse that at a parish level, the amount of quarters allocated to land in proportion to the rest of the total is not significant from the parish's point of view. It is not a very high figure.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Deputy Rondel?

DEPUTY RONDEL: Yes. We have covered the change of use to sports and agriculture, but what about other recreational uses? I am aware that in your case, Mr Le Feuvre, you do have other uses on your land. What is the view of the Landowners Association in that area?

MR LE FEUVRE: We haven't got a problem with it, providing it is not creating a nuisance to neighbours or anything, and invariably a lot of these recreational purposes, if circumstances changed, they don't involve building in many cases and it would allow the land to revert back to agriculture in the future if there was a need.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Senator Vibert?

SENATOR VIBERT: Up at Planning and Environment there is a move, or an apparent move, to actually change the law to allow agricultural land to be sold and to remove the restrictions on the sale of agricultural land. I wondered what the Association's view of that was and whether you think that would be helpful to the environment. I accept the fact that it would be helpful to landowners to be able to sell it to people other than in agriculture, but of course it raises the prospect of changing the face of Jersey to some degree to sort of manicured lawns, in other words, fields into manicured lawns, or whatever private people want to do with the land that they buy. I just wondered what the view was of your Association about any moves to change that kind of law.

MR LE FEUVRE: Well, to be honest, we as an Association haven't discussed it. I don't know if my colleagues want to comment on it. I personally haven't got a problem with it, but we have not discussed it specifically.

MR LE CORNU: Exactly. This is where we are a new organisation. We have got our main meeting tomorrow evening and, okay, a lot of work has been done to get it off the ground. I, likewise, have no problem with that, but, you know, there are a lot of other things to be discussed within the Association.

MR LE FEUVRE: Can I just come back on that particular point you have raised? We have always been able to sell our land to a non-farmer, have we not? It is the use that owner would

put to it. Are you intimating that the new owner could turn it to a garden or plant it as forest or whatever?

SENATOR VIBERT: Yes. There is a view amongst certain aspects of the Environmental Department that they would rather see that happen than see the land go backwards.

MR LE FEUVRE: Well, exactly. This is exactly where we are coming from, and I think it is worth mentioning at this juncture, that although in some ways we are doing it at the eleventh hour, we are looking at the future and the way this problem that we are all facing will evolve and develop. I don't think we've got a lot of choice. I think that could be very helpful. It would enhance the appearance of property, roadside, fields and so anything to encourage more hedge planting and tree planting generally has got to be a good thing.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: Could we pick that one up actually, because the view of the Farmers Union was that they would resist the removal of the '74 Law where land that was actively being farmed could be purchased by wealthy immigrants to turn it into gardens and lawns and so on. They felt that it would actually bring pressure on them and potentially take the best land away from them. Now, if we are looking to strengthen the agricultural industry, which has an impact on the landowners in any case, I was wanting you to comment really on that view, that actually by removing all the conditions it could have a detrimental effect on existing farm units, which in effect would ripple to landowners in any case, so it is a question of balance?

MR LE FEUVRE: Thank you for explaining that detail. I think this is an important one. One casts one's mind back to the situations where actual property owners would want to acquire a field. I didn't visualise a 10 vergee field adjacent to a manor or wherever. I was thinking more of the fields that Deputy Baudains was referring to, small fields adjacent to a property, two verges or three verges. Frankly, maybe you could consider, Senator Vibert, the environmental people could consider, qualifying either by size or location or establishing whether it actually is required by the farming industry. That is the dilemma we have got. It is lack of demand or lack of requirement, basically.

SENATOR VIBERT: I think the fear of the farming industry also is that if there was a reason for an upturn in agriculture and that land has been lost, there is no opportunity to get it back. Once it has gone, it has gone.

MR LE FEUVRE: That is fair comment, yes.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: I was just going to ask whether there were any particular comments that Mr Baudains wished to make, or is he happy to sit in the corner?

MR BAUDAINS: I have a difficulty in this way, in that I came in at the eleventh hour, as he says.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Could you move your chair forward so that we can pick you up on the microphone?

MR BAUDAINS: I am in some difficulty, in that I came into the Association at the eleventh hour as acting chairman. I think you have covered most of it. I think, in looking at it, at the laws, the laws for planning and agriculture were all brought in when we needed all the land we could find. We needed to maintain crops. We wanted to fill the boats going backwards and forwards. All that has changed. It is a completely and utterly different ball game. I think you are going to, when you are talking about changing the law on use of lands, I think it is something that needs to be done very sensitively, but I certainly think it should be looked at.

DEPUTY BAUDAINS: I think the recommendation now with planning, or the current planning, is that the law has been outstripped by the change, the whole Island Plan has actually been outstripped by the change in the agricultural industry. There are recommendations and a lot of works currently being done on it and, of course, it has to be done in consultation with the industry when you are dealing with something as difficult and sensitive as our farm land, but it is certainly being done.

MR LE FEUVRE: Yes.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Did you want to follow through on that one, Deputy Rondel?

DEPUTY RONDEL: You were going to follow through on that one, Jean, to start with.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: I was actually going to try to bring it back to the Agri-Environmental Scheme.

DEPUTY RONDEL: Right, if you would, okay. Carry on.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: As you know, the purpose of the Scrutiny Panel is to actually look at the Agri-Environmental Scheme as proposed two years ago. It was accepted by the States and indeed the States voted for the funding, initially at 700,000 for the first year, moving, I think it was, to 1.2 million in the second year and so on. The scheme was based, as the

objectives were to enhance the environment, in partnership effectively with the farmers of the Island.

So there would always be a contribution by the farmers towards the full cost of rolling out some of the benefits which the Island would enjoy, whether it is tree planting, whether it is winter crops, whatever, the principle was there would be a contribution from the active industry.

Now, the question I would like to ask is where land is not being farmed, there is clearly no economic advantage in that land. If the environmental programme, the Agri-Environmental Scheme, was to be relevant for that land, would you be saying that it would only be attractive to landowners if the cost of delivering what are called “environmental goods” would then have to be met by the Government at 100%? This is the issue.

It seems to me that the landowners are coming at it from a different direction to the farmers. The farmers are actually generating income by using the land. The landowners who have land which is not being used are then looking simply to maintain it, to maintain the environment, the environmental aspects. The question which hadn't arisen to the extent two years ago was the fact that fields were not, to a large extent, made to just look after themselves, whereas that is increasingly the case. So there were a number of components in the scheme which all produced what was called environmental goods, but the question that seems to me arises for land that is not worked is how that would actually be delivered if the landowner was expected to pay 20% of costs.

MR LE FEUVRE: Well, obviously, if the landowner is not receiving any income. From our point of view, we are not looking at only the Government to assist with this dilemma. We are looking at alternative crops obviously, and if there is an income from that, that will make a difference, but there is still going to be land which may not even be viable for these type of crops, for whatever reason, either location or dry land or whatever. So it is a question ... I don't think we are looking at a huge sum of money per vergee, but, you know, one can easily do a costing on what it costs to maintain and keep a field clean and tidy or whatever. So it is something to be looked at in conjunction to the way bona fide farmers are treated. That is basically where this is coming from.

SENATOR VIBERT: I am not sure how the tax situation works with respect to this. Do you get tax deductions for cleaning the land and for hedging and branchage? Is that the case?

MR LE FEUVRE: Well, it is a cost to them. If you are a bona fide farmer, then obviously it is part of your costs as a farmer.

SENATOR VIBERT: But if you are a landowner, I mean.

MR LE FEUVRE: As a landowner you wouldn't.

SENATOR VIBERT: You don't get that at all?

MR LE FEUVRE: No, you don't, because you are not running a business any more.

SENATOR VIBERT: Well, no, but you are in effect getting income from it.

MR LE FEUVRE: If you are lucky enough to be renting it, yes. But then, if you are having rental, the onus falls back on the tenant. It is the tenant that maintains the land, not the landlord.

SENATOR VIBERT: Okay.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Deputy Rondel?

DEPUTY RONDEL: This morning I put a question to the Farmers Union on waste polythene and the likes and other things like old farm machinery being left in fields and the like needing a clean up. They virtually or basically said that much of the problems had been caused by farmers who had gone out of the industry and not disposed of their polythene and the like and took very little upon themselves as being responsible. That is the way I look at it from the response I got. Amongst the Landowners Association I am sure they are all very responsible people and I know many of them. That being the case, the views of your Association on any clean up of the existing environment I would like to hear, because many areas of St Ouens and other areas of the western parishes -- I do not know so much about the eastern because I am not so familiar -- but there is still an awful lot of polythene and the likes around.

MR LE FEUVRE: I think those who are fortunate enough to still have tenants on their land, I think this is one of the conditions that a landlord would impose on his tenant. But what happens at this time of the year is that the farmers themselves have gone through a very busy period. They remove the plastic at, let us say, the end of March or during the month of March. They have wrapped it and left it in the corner of the field neatly wrapped for the moment. They have gone on to lift the potatoes. They have invariably put in a follow up crop of whatever. So it is still sitting there. I would expect that to be cleared in the foreseeable

future. So are you talking about plastic that has been left on the ----

DEPUTY RONDEL: Historically, yes, over several years.

MR LE FEUVRE: Well, I'm not aware of too much in our area. I don't know ... I can't think of any. A lot of the one I see currently is this year's polythene. I'm personally not aware of too much of it.

DEPUTY RONDEL: What about farm machinery and the likes, potato boxes and machinery?

MR LE FEUVRE: Ah. Yeah, again, I don't know too much of that. I haven't seen too much of that.

MR LE CORNU: Can I just come in? Okay, there is not too much of it, but there is some of it. In some areas there are big rolls of polythene that are left. I've seen that and I know where there's some. Obviously, also there is some machinery, but that is the responsibility of the tenant, really and truthfully, because admitted they have been under pressure and in the last couple of years there has been a decline in the returns for their products and what-have-you. One can sympathise to some extent, but when all is said and done, if it is your policy to cultivate your fields correctly and cleanliness and like doing the hedgerow and all that, none of that should be left. You know, that's an important issue as part of the environment and keeping Jersey tidy. I think the onus is on the tenant.

DEPUTY RONDEL: So, therefore, how will your Association deal with it and its membership, obviously, because some of them will have tenants or past tenants? How has it been dealt with to have a clean up?

MR LE FEUVRE: I think it is relevant on this subject actually to mention how in the 12 months things have changed dramatically, in that, as you are probably aware, there is a big production consortium now formed, where landlords are in the position of having negotiated a lease situation with a given farm business. This farm business has gone into partnership with five other businesses. So the people actually working your land are not necessarily the people who you drew up your first agreement with. That is an anomaly that needs to be addressed, I think, but that has occurred in the last 12 months. There are aspects that have evolved on land cultivation where, when most of us were still farming, there was a certain time when you just didn't go on to the land when you had had torrential rain, but unfortunately we are getting situations now where, because ... and I emphasise that it is not always the farmer's fault. It is

the pressure of that supermarkets are putting on the producer that forces them to go out and dig potatoes out of mud. Well, as a landowner, you are not exactly happy to see the digger go round your field with ruts going down 12 inches, but the supermarkets are so insisting that they have a weekly programme to be met that they are threatening to sue the producer if he doesn't produce the tonnage. It is that sort of situation that you are facing today. But, certainly, as the Landowners Association -- to come back to the original question -- we are very concerned about the use and the abuse of farm land and we would like to think that, directly or indirectly, we will have some influence on future land use and how it is managed.

DEPUTY BAUDAINS: Can I ask a question that I asked the farmers this morning? With any subsidy or encouragement to take good care of land there seems to be a feeling amongst the public that there should be a quid pro quo from the landowners to allow public access to the land. You know: "It is our money, our taxes which have helped all this, so we want something back." Would you comment on that?

MR LE FEUVRE: Again, it is not something we have discussed in any detail. It has been touched on in one of our first committee meetings, but, again, personally, depending on the location and what is in the land, again, personally, I have no problem with that. But obviously if you have got a crop in the land, that is another matter. If you have got dogs running all over fields and crops, it is not so practical. But, in general terms, particularly if the land location is either new or existing woodland or on a headland or something, I don't see a problem with that.

SENATOR VIBERT: So in actual terms of what we are being going to be able to put down in relation to the Agri-Environment Scheme, in terms of the evidence we have had from you, how quickly and how possible would it be for you to produce any figures on the cost of maintaining land by the vergee in a reasonable state, including your branchage and all the rest of it? Is that something that could be done reasonably quickly?

MR LE CORNU: I would have thought so. I would have thought so.

MR LE FEUVRE: Yes.

SENATOR VIBERT: Because I think that could be quite helpful. It certainly would be helpful to me.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: I think the detail, if I could just pick up on that, the detail of what

you mean by “managing land”, I think there is a gap of understanding by a number of people as to what we actually mean by that. I think it would be helpful if there was some kind of description -- it doesn't have to be that detailed -- of what does management of land entail which is not worked. Now, I believe that the National Trust may have done some work on that already, but I think it would help to raise the level of understanding of what we mean by taking care of the land or managing the land. Probably the Agri-Environmental Scheme was focusing essentially on land which is already worked, which is why there were partnerships to reduce pesticides, nitrates and all that kind of thing. It didn't focus so much on land which wasn't worked, but I think increasingly, because of what you have been suggesting, if it is not with us now, the threat is there for sure. So is that something that could be undertaken perhaps?

MR LE FEUVRE: Well, certainly, we are working very closely because the National Trust initially were very helpful in assisting us in setting us up. We can certainly liaise with them and see what facts and figures they have and we can certainly do our sums on the matter also and, in doing so, specify what the costs relate to basically.

SENATOR VIBERT: You see, as a layman, I'm not in agriculture, so as a layman, to me it means keeping the brambles out of the place, making sure your hedges are cut and that sort of thing, but there could be a lot more that the public and somebody like myself would not be aware of. So it would be very helpful if you could actually almost list out what you consider to be what needs to be done to keep the land in good shape that is not being farmed.

MR LE CORNU: Because if land is neglected, again, in terms of gales and schools and what-have-you, if fields have been abandoned, with your dog seed and your ragwort and all this sort of thing, this what happens and this is why you do go round the Island and you see a lot of fields. There are very few fields that are totally clear of dogs and this sort of thing, but it is only going to get worse. That is basically the management. It is all well and good, as many people say, to put it to grass and all this sort of thing, but what are you going to do with all the grass? There is a limitation. We are getting less and less milk producers and what-have-you. They do silage so there is a limit as to the amount of feed you are going to absorb. Okay, there might be quite a lot of horse owners and what have you, but there is a limit again as to how much hay a horse can eat. If you go over the feed, they could get laminitis and you run

into complications. So, you know, it is becoming, yes, a very difficult situation.

SENATOR VIBERT: I think what we are trying to do is to try and be as helpful as we can in sort of suggesting some ideas to you that would help us in framing any recommendations. It may be outside our terms of reference, I do not know, we haven't discussed that, to be framing some sort of recommendations as to the kind of that aid that kind of land will require in the Agri-Environmental Scheme. That is really the point I am making.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Deputy Rondel?

DEPUTY RONDEL: You mentioned earlier supermarkets and that. There must be protocols for these supermarkets on the provision of caring for the land and also the environment, surely?

MR LE FEUVRE: They do, they do, but the question of supply and demand seems to overtake that protocol at times.

DEPUTY RONDEL: I should think that's the last thing they'd do.

MR LE FEUVRE: They need it yesterday not tomorrow, yes.

DEPUTY BAUDAINS: I was just going to basically make the comment and ask if you would agree with me that, in neglecting land, the public may think that you simply plough it and then you can use it again, but there is quite a long period before you can actually get it back into good production because the weed will keep coming back from the seeds in the soil.

MR LE FEUVRE: Sure.

DEPUTY BAUDAINS: So it is not just a quick remedy. Once it has been left to deteriorate, it is very expensive and time consuming.

MR LE FEUVRE: Yes, absolutely. Charles used the word "*management*" and that is what it amounts to. It is an ongoing thing. It is not a one-off. You just don't say "Well, I've managed the field" and walk away. That is why the best managers of land have always traditionally been farmers, because they are with the land 12 months of the year and not, you know

SENATOR VIBERT: That is what they claimed. I was going to put this question to you, whether you agreed with their comments that farmers are in fact the best people to keep the land environmentally sound?

MR LE FEUVRE: I can't disagree with that. But this is why we are formed, because one has

got to recognise the problems they are facing, economic ones and supply and demand, and they just don't require the land, so what happens? It is back on the landowner's shoulders, so it is a new set of problems altogether, which frankly we have foreseen coming for some time, but the chicken has come home to roost.

MR BAUDAINS: On the costing, I think we have to have two separate costings because I think people like the National Trust (and I am on the National Trust Council, so that you are aware of that), the National Trust like perhaps to see and revert to nature, so all they need to do is to remove the noxious weeds; whereas if we are talking about maintaining land in production, it is going to be a totally different cost. I think we need to have two looks at it both ways.

SENATOR VIBERT: We need it both ways, yes, because I think in fact the *JEP* did make the point this morning that it wasn't just a question of this marginal land being allowed to go. They really wanted to keep it soft -- I think the phrase they used was "soft" -- for agriculture, meaning that I could come back quickly if there was a need for it.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: I am conscious of the time. Are there any final statements that you wish to make? No? Any further questions from the table?

DEPUTY BAUDAINS: No. I think it has been very useful you coming in at this juncture actually.

SENATOR VIBERT: Absolutely.

DEPUTY BAUDAINS: I think it is quite opportune that you have been set up in conjunction with what we are doing here, because, you know, you are identifying a problem which possibly wasn't identified two years ago.

MR LE FEUVRE: Well, it is sound reduction of land use.

MR LE CORNU: If I may just comment on the fact, okay, of the Farmers Union and our good selves and what-have-you, these farmers have, okay, all been involved in it and they may be sympathetic and understanding to the people who are actually farm for a living nowadays, but the thing is they can be supportive and most of those farms that are farming now are landowners in any case. So we are all supportive of one another. It is much like, you know, us and them sort of thing, but we are all talking the same language, aren't we?

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: It is a common problem.

MR LE CORNU: Exactly, because, you know, as I was saying, the farmers that are there today, next year is going to be less and so it is going to go on, sadly, because we cannot, with all the goodwill in the world, envisage, you know, people coming through. The thing is the old traditional farms no longer suit their purpose for modern day farming, so you are talking really of some people and, you know, how can they start basically? This is the thing. So that is, again, the actual cost to start up farming. If they are going to start acquiring the land, building agricultural sheds and stores and accommodation and a house and what-have-you, what are we talking of -- a colossal sum of money. They are going to go somewhere else, sadly. One shouldn't be saying that. One should be encouraging people to come out and utilise the land, but that is the situation we are in.

MR BAUDAINS: If I could just add to that, I heard of two young farmers who were getting discouraged and might leave the industry and I think this Government need to encourage any young farmer that they see who is trying to get on the farming ladder in any way possible to get into the industry, because, without them, there will be nothing.

SENATOR VIBERT: I wish you would come to some of our planning meetings and made that statement, because they are not being very helpful, I don't think.

MR BAUDAINS: Well, I did spend ten years on planning.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Right. On behalf of the Panel, I would like to thank you for your submission and your comments. Thank you.

MR LE FEUVRE: Thank you.