

3.11 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services regarding the maintenance of the Rue des Prés Trading Estate:

Would the Minister identify what the schedule is for the maintenance of Rue des Prés Trading Estate and whether any plans exist to improve parking arrangements?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye (The Minister for Transport and Technical Services):

Following significant budget cuts imposed on the Parks and Gardens Section of the Transport and Technical Services Department as part of a recent Fundamental Spending Review, that section has had to prioritise its workload, and visits to the Rue des Prés Trading Estate are now effectively branchage visits that take place, on average, about twice a year. Unfortunately, due to weather, this year one of the visits was missed as staff were diverted to other areas of higher importance in order to maintain standards that are in full view of the general public and visitors to the Island. However, the department is preparing to go into the trading estate in the next few weeks with a team of staff at the weekend to undertake general cleanup of the roadside verges. With respect to the parking, this has been reviewed many times between the department and the Parish of St. Saviour. Unfortunately, there is no obvious solution to deal with both the employees, visiting trades people, and the number of large works vehicles that regularly park on the roads. However, the road is due for resurfacing in about two years' time and the opportunity will be taken then to see if some of the footpaths and verges can be altered to provide some additional parking.

3.11.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Would the Minister not accept that by reducing it to branchage status he is causing considerable embarrassment to people like the Minister for Economic Development, who is bringing visitors to see the new high-tech Jersey and is up to his eyeballs in weeds, and crawling over parked cars to get to the entrances to offices? Does he believe that this is an ideal projection of Jersey in 2007?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I would certainly accept, that current circumstances mean that the Rue des Prés Trading Estate is not being shown off to its best. However, I am sure if the Minister for Economic Development was here, he would support the approach of my department, which has been to concentrate efforts on other areas, namely, areas that are more frequented by tourists, for example. But I regret that I have to remind Members that where we make cuts in budgets, there are consequences. The section of the department that deals with these matters has lost staff, and we simply do not have enough people to go around any longer. The effects around the Island are there to be seen. Weeds grow out of the edges of roads, and I, like many others, would love to be able to improve on things, but I am afraid that unless the States as a whole are prepared to find my department more money to deal with these matters, the situation will continue as it is, and indeed, I have to find another £170,000 worth of cuts in the Parks and Gardens Section over the next year. So it is going to get worse.

3.11.2 Deputy J.B. Fox:

Many years ago there was a traders' association that encouraged the cleaning out of the interior of commercial premises, which reduced many of the problems on the roads of parking, et cetera. I just wondered if the Minister would take on board seeing if the trading association still exists and might be encouraged to have a re-enactment, which might solve many of the problems that currently exist, it would appear.

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I am always happy to explore any avenue of co-operation between my department, the Parishes, and residential trades associations, and I can assure the Deputy that I very much feel that has already been approached, and I will be happy to look at that again.

3.11.3 Senator J.L. Perchard:

The Minister, like so many of his colleagues on the Council of Ministers, is making regular public pleas for more money. I think, Sir, while I intend to ask a question, that will fall on deaf ears time and time again. We need to get to grips with the service provision that we are providing. Now, the Minister did say in answer to a question, that one of the slots was missed because the weather was not suitable, or appropriate. Does that mean that his department, or the Parks and Gardens, does not operate when it is not suitable weather?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I can assure the Senator that employees of Jersey Transport and Technical Services Department are not a namby-pamby bunch who are not prepared to go out in inclement conditions. In fact, quite the contrary. I have been consistently impressed by the ability of Transport and Technical Services workers to get out there and do their bit for the public under all weather conditions. They go out there and fix the problems caused by flooding, collapses, landslides, and so forth, and I take issue with the Senator as well. This is a Minister who does not whinge. My department has taken a very significant number of cuts over decades, in fact, far too many; and the result is that we are having a real struggle now to support the Island's infrastructure. I strongly suggest that we need to reflect upon the sort of work that my department is doing. I would be delighted to be extending the sewerage system; I do not have the money to do it. I am instead involved with repairs and maintenance. I would be delighted to improve the roads more than we are at the moment. We have got some money to do it, but we could do more. All we are doing, in effect, is standing still instead of allowing further deterioration. I will not go on, but that is the situation. This is not a department that is simply asking for more money for the sake of it. We need to support this Island's infrastructure. It is my department that does that, and we simply do not have enough money to do it properly.

3.11.4 Senator J.L. Perchard:

The Minister failed to answer my very simple question. He spoke for a long time; perhaps there is something to be learned from that. My question was: why was the slot missed? The Minister said because the weather was not suitable and the slot to cut the banks at Rue de Prés was missed by his department. Well, what is that? What is the significance of the weather?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

Well, I am very surprised to hear that, coming from a former farmer. The significance of the weather has been due to very extensive rainfall. There have been lush conditions all around the Island which has meant extensive growth in vegetation, which means by import that the branchage situation which I describe, is now the real aspect of approach to the Rue des Prés Trading Estate, has had effect all around the Island, and simply, the Parks and Gardens Department have had an enormous amount of extra work to do with the enormous amount of growth of vegetation across the entire Island.

3.11.5 Deputy C.J. Scott Warren of St. Saviour:

I appreciate the funding problems with his department, but can the Minister please comment on the bad state of some areas of the pavements on the Trading Estate?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I think I alluded to this in my first answer. The reality is that a number of pavements and roadways around the Island are not in a condition that I would be happy with simply because of the growth of weeds and suchlike. Now, this is a product of two key issues. One, the department no longer uses the type of pesticide that would have dealt with this problem because it is not approved any longer under environmental terms. Secondly, we simply do not have the numbers of staff required to go out and deal with these problems. Weeds, I regret, grow very quickly. The level of my staff does not.

