

**Statement to be made by Senator E.P. Vibert,
one of the Chairmen of the Shadow Scrutiny Panels
on 6th July 2004**

On Thursday of this week, the Shadow Scrutiny Panel, which I chair, will be holding its first public hearing, starting a new era of public scrutiny approved by this Assembly last year as part of the reforms of the machinery of Government.

The Shadow Scrutiny Panel will be taking evidence in public from a variety of witnesses regarding the Agri-Environment scheme, which was approved by the States in July 2002 and for which £700,000 was approved, but which subsequently was removed from funding during the Fundamental Spending Review.

The Panel has received submissions from a variety of individuals and organisations questioning how this was allowed to happen and the likely consequences to the Jersey environment as a result of the scheme not going forward.

The Shadow Scrutiny Panel, which I chair, is also reviewing the proposed new Water Law for Jersey and public hearings on this matter will be held commencing on 19th July.

This Inquiry will focus on the necessity of the Law, the cost implications and the legal conflict between land-owners right of ownership of what is below the ground and the need for clarity regarding the legal rights over water beneath their ground.

Two further subjects are being reviewed by my Panel – the proposal by the Harbours and Airport Committee relating to the operations of St. Helier Harbour and the deliberations of the Environment and Public Services Committee regarding the disposal of Jersey's waste through incineration and the replacement of the Bellozanne Incinerator at a likely cost of over £80,000,000.

With respect to the waste disposal subject, my Panel viewed with some alarm the story in the Jersey Evening Post last week in which the President of the Environment and Public Services Committee voiced his concerns that he wished a decision by the States on this matter within four months.

The President is aware that my Panel has been waiting for two months for the Environment and Public Services Committee's evidence to support its proposed strategy, which was only received yesterday. There is a massive amount of conflicting evidence regarding the disposal of Jersey's waste and the best way of achieving it. It is clear that my Scrutiny Panel will not be able to begin the public hearings on this until after the summer break, sometime in September.

It is important that I point out to the Assembly that, when proposing the scrutiny proposals, the then President of the Policy and Resources Committee accepted that there might be times when it would be necessary to delay decision-making until after the Scrutiny Panel had completed its work. We believe this is one such occasion.

My Scrutiny Panel is very conscious of the need for this matter to be dealt with as quickly as possible, due to the condition of the current incinerator. But we are also conscious of the fact that decisions that need to be made in this respect are very far-reaching in terms of the environment as well as being an enormous financial burden on the taxpayer and the proposals require diligent and rigorous examination by the Panel.

Because of this, I have to inform the Assembly that the view of my Shadow Scrutiny Panel is that we

will not be rushed on this matter to meet a deadline of the Committee President, even though we accept his view that the matter is of the utmost urgency.

Members of the public are most welcome to attend the hearings of the Shadow Scrutiny Panel which will commence in the Scrutiny Room, in this building, immediately after the election of Jurat has been completed. Members of this Assembly are also welcome to view proceedings.

Once scrutiny of the four subjects outlined in this statement have been completed, hopefully by late November, my Panel will commence work on more subjects. Two that have been proposed for consideration are the problems of nursery school places in the Island and the need to institute price control on first-time buyer homes. We welcome any suggestions from States members of any other subject they believe merit attention by the Scrutiny Panel.