

STATES OF JERSEY



COMPOSTING FACILITIES (P.258/2005): COMMENTS

**Presented to the States on 9th March 2006
by the Minister for Transport and Technical Services**

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

RESPONSE TO DEPUTY (formerly SENATOR) LE CLAIRE'S PROPOSITION RE: COMPOSTING FACILITIES

General Comment

As Minister for Transport and Technical Services, I suggest that this proposition has no merit in it whatsoever. It is irresponsible to suggest the immediate closure of the current facility. Moreover, there are numerous aspects of the proposition that are refuted.

The Minister of Health and Social Services will respond separately to the erroneous health issues raised.

Transport and Technical Services (T&TS) (formerly Environment and Public Services) has always acknowledged that the current composting facility at La Collette should be shut down as soon as possible. In July 2005, the States approved a comprehensive Solid Waste Strategy, which secured a funded solution for composting.

- To close the existing composting facility with immediate effect would result in there being no management of the Island's green waste (circa 12,000 tonnes per annum).
- A new enclosed composting facility will take at least 12 months minimum to construct, after all Planning approvals have been received. This means that the Island would be without a composting facility until the middle of 2007.
- Bellozanne cannot cope with potentially 12,000 tonnes of green waste being added to the existing load on the site.
- To construct 12 composting facilities around the Island would require 12 concrete slabs, with drainage shredding and composting equipment, and manpower to operate them, and there would be greater smell problems, multiplied by 12 for the next 12-18 months.
- Whilst costs are not a major factor in strongly opposing this proposition, the costs of constructing 12 individual sites would be considerable. The cost of managing and operating 12 individual sites would be significantly higher than operating one site.

Proposition (a)

To agree that the composting facility at La Collette operated by the T&TSD (formerly the Environment and Public Services Committee) should cease accepting new material with immediate effect.

Response

The way this paragraph is worded means that, subject to the States approving this Proposition, the La Collette facility would close immediately and there would be no alternative sites available for the reception of green waste. If members of the public and all landscape gardeners, etc., took their green waste to Bellozanne, the tonnage would increase significantly, with the result that the Bellozanne site would become overloaded and would inevitably have to close on health and safety grounds. The Bellozanne incinerator is already struggling to cope with the present load, and adding the green waste would be an increase in load of about 15%. Also, this material is wet, especially in winter, and does not burn well.

Even if limited amounts of green waste were accepted, these would have to be stockpiled with the remaining bulky waste, and from past experience (prior to composting) it is known that this material starts to ferment and heat up, and the waste piles readily catch fire. Before composting started, when all of the green waste was taken to Bellozanne, fires were a regular occurrence in the stockpiles, causing heavily pollutant-laden smoke to cover the residential area of Bellozanne.

If green waste was not accepted at Bellozanne, it is inevitable that fly-tipping would occur extremely quickly and would become an Island-wide problem. The consequential impact of receiving green waste at Bellozanne, overloading the site and having to close the site on health and safety grounds, would effectively mean the Island had no waste disposal facility at all at times.

Proposition (b)

To request the Minister for Health and Social Services (formerly the Committee) to investigate any health-related issues that have affected residents in the vicinity of the present composting facility and to report back to the States on the result of that investigation.

Response

This matter **has been referred to** the Minister for Health and Social Services for investigation.

Proposition (c)

To instruct the T&TSD (formerly Environment and Public Services Committee) to contact the 12 Parishes in an attempt to identify parish sites for local treatment of material for composting until a permanent composting facility has been created.

Response

The Proposition states that the T&TSD (E&PSC) should be instructed to contact the 12 Parishes **in an attempt** to identify Parish sites. Prior to Crabbé being developed as a large scale composting site, a review of alternative locations was undertaken by a joint working party consisting of Officers from Health Protection, Planning, Environment, and PSD. A total of 17 sites were reviewed and none of them, with the exception of Crabbé, was found to be suitable for accepting and composting green waste in open windrow form.

There have been attempts in the past to contract with the farming community to set up “satellite composting” facilities, which the farmers would then operate. These facilities failed very quickly, as the farming industry was unable to allocate the amount of time required to turn the compost regularly and produce a high quality material. The consequence was smelly piles of green waste around the Island, with potential pollution emanating from these sites. Under the current Water Pollution Law, this would not be acceptable, and anyone taking on this responsibility would be putting themselves at a significant risk of prosecution under the Water Pollution (Jersey) Law.

For the 12 Parishes to identify an area of land in an acceptable timescale is highly unlikely. In addition, each Parish would then have to construct a concrete slab, with drainage, to ensure that any leachate collected, especially during the winter period, was then tankered to the Bellozanne Sewage Treatment Works. The Parish would then have to contract with an operator to shred and compost the material, and to manage the site, as T&TSD would not have sufficient resource to manage 12 sites.

With 12 sites operating until a new central facility is constructed, there would then be 12 smell problems around the Island.

The Comité des Connétables presented its Comments on the proposition to the States on 19th December 2005, saying that it considered it would be a retrograde step to identify separate sites within each Parish.

Proposition (d)

To agree that, as an interim solution, all composting material from the Parish of St. Helier, and from any other parish where a temporary site cannot be identified, should be sent for incineration at Bellozanne.

Response

For all green waste emanating from the Parish of St. Helier to be delivered to Bellozanne for incineration is a totally unacceptable proposition. As described in Proposition (a), green waste entering the waste stream at Bellozanne is known to decompose and cause the stockpile of the material to heat up. The result of this internal decomposition within the waste pile results in fires, which then cover the Bellozanne neighbourhood with thick polluting smoke from a totally uncontrolled combustion system.

When fires occur, the only option is to close the Refuse Handling Plant until the situation can be managed and cleared. This results in bulky waste not being received for a number of days.

If the situation should deteriorate further, it is possible that the site would not be able to operate in a safe manner for T&TSD employees, residents of the Bellozanne area (due to the potential fire problems), and members of the public wishing to visit the site.

This green waste material is wet and does not burn well, and its addition to the incinerator would decrease the efficiency of combustion.