

#### **4. Questions to Ministers without notice - The Minister for Transport and Technical Services**

The Bailiff:

Very well. That brings questions on notice to an end. We come now to questions to Ministers without notice and the first period is to the Minister for Transport and Technical Services.

##### **4.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

I have been away from the Island for the last 10 days, so I would dearly love to know what the Minister for Transport and Technical Services has managed to do and what actions has he taken to resolve the lack of recognition - the absence of recognition - of the Jersey Bus Company. Has that matter been resolved or is it still pending?

##### **Deputy K.C. Lewis (The Minister for Transport and Technical Services):**

I have been informed that the situation is still ongoing. The workforce may decide for whom they wish to be recognised as a union. If this cannot be agreed with the company then after a series of several meetings it will go to the J.A.C.S. (Jersey Advisory and Conciliatory Service).

##### **4.1.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Could the Minister inform us what he has done personally in the last 10 days to resolve this issue and how long he expects this dispute to go on?

##### **Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

I am not aware it is a dispute. It is about recognition of a union, which is standard procedure. It is not for me to do this. It is for the workforce and the company to agree jointly the way forward. If this cannot be agreed then it will go to J.A.C.S.

##### **4.2 Deputy S. Pitman of St. Helier:**

I am just following on from that question. A couple of weeks ago myself and Deputy Trevor Pitman had a meeting with staff representatives of the bus company. The civil servant that was present agreed to look at the timetables and shifts. I just wanted to know what progress had been made with that.

##### **Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Yes, that is quite correct. This is a matter for Liberty Bus and the workforce. The Minister does not have any jurisdiction over shifts. But following a representation from the 2 Deputies and some of the workforce, I have asked my officers to discuss this with Liberty Bus to find a way forward. I believe that is happening. But split shifts are part of a working pattern and cannot be eliminated completely.

##### **4.2.1 Deputy S. Pitman:**

Could the Minister tell us when his civil servant will be getting back to him regarding the discussions with Liberty Bus Company?

##### **Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Yes. I have been informed that the talks are still ongoing. But they are trying to sort the shifts out to make it easier for the staff. As I say, they will not be eliminated completely.

##### **4.3 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:**

I believe the Minister has put the bus company on 100 days' notice for lack of performance. Could he advise us when that 100 days expires and could he also advise us what happens thereafter should nothing improve?

##### **Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

I did not quite catch the question, Sir.

**The Bailiff:**

Have you put the company on 100 days' notice to have improved performance?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

No. There is a constant dialogue between my officers and Liberty Bus on performance generally. I have been informed that complaints have dropped 96 per cent. The only complaints that people are getting now are not with the timetable but the fact that buses are in fact full. So, they are going to start putting on more buses and the new timetables will be released shortly.

**4.4 Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour:**

I forget the exact name of the law, but can the Minister please advise where the new maintenance of roads law, with the utilities companies is, what are the hold-ups and when it is going to be lodged in this Assembly, as it is long overdue? Thank you.

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

I think the Deputy is referring to the proposed Street Works Management Law. I believe that will be early next year. It is in draft form at the moment.

**4.4.1 Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

Can the Minister please advise what is holding up the progress of this law? Thank you.

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

It is a work in progress.

**4.5 Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

In an earlier question this morning, concern was expressed when it came to light about failure of certain components of the new incinerator. Can the Minister confirm emission tests are being carried out and if not, why not?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Emission tests are monitored daily and reported to the Minister for Planning and Environment, who has a regulatory function. That is done on a quarterly basis. I thought the question this morning was regarding health checks... the workforce.

**4.5.1 Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

There was a question with regard to health checks this morning. I personally think it is really important that those ongoing health checks are being carried out.

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Yes, I have made a note of that and I will inquire with the department.

[11:45]

**4.6 Connétable M.J. Paddock of St. Ouen:**

Can the Minister advise the Assembly at what stage his department is with regards to the Road Safety Strategy and the date when this piece of work may be completed?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Again, that is ongoing. Is the Constable referring to the Schools' Road Safety Strategy? Yes, that is happening at the moment. That is out to consultation. That will be reported on shortly and I will report back to Members on that.

**4.7 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Will the Minister confirm that school bus tickets may be used on Liberty Bus and until what time this may take place on school days?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

I believe that to be. I am not aware of any time limits.

**4.7.1 Deputy M. Tadier:**

The reason I ask is that some students stay on after school for various extracurricular activities and make their way to the Weighbridge. It seems to me that it is unclear for them until what time they may use the bus service without being charged the 70p fare.

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

I am not aware of a time limit, but I will of course check that out and get back to the Deputy.

**4.8 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:**

Given that the ongoing labour relations issue inevitably affects staff morale and inevitably take away a lot of management energy and no doubt prove a matter of considerable frustration to the Minister, could the Minister tell us what deadline he has set for the resolution of these issues, as opposed to this constant work in progress, matters just going on, people talking to each other? It has become a very open-ended frustrating process all round. Thank you.

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

As I pointed out, discussions are going on regarding union recognition. As I said, if that does not happen then it will go to J.A.C.S. But, I can see a resolution within weeks.

**Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:**

Sorry, the question was - I wonder if the Minister could reply - has he set a deadline for Liberty Bus to sort this out by? Thank you.

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

No. But I have requested they sort things out pronto.

**4.9 Deputy T.M. Pitman:**

In an earlier response the Minister said that the issue of split shifts was not his responsibility. While I accept that, I am sure he must agree that if those split shifts are done in such a pattern that is breaching the law and having an impact on drivers' health then it definitely is his responsibility to do something. Can he tell us where we are with that issue?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Yes. The split shifts do not break the law. It is well within the law and is an operational matter for Liberty Bus. However, I would obviously encourage as few split shifts as possible to maintain a quality of life for all working staff at the bus company.

**4.10 Connétable D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence:**

The Minister responded to the Connétable of St. Ouen and answered about the Schools' Road Safety Strategy. What I would like to know is about the Island-wide Road Safety Strategy for which consultation began I think, probably, some 6 months ago. We are still waiting to hear from it and are being constantly asked by parishioners what is going to happen to the Island-wide speed limits. I really want to know about this: when we are going to have something and when the Minister will be bringing something to the House for debate.

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Indeed. I had a meeting with my officers on this very subject yesterday. I have gone through all the plans and all the maps, *et cetera*. Constables are being consulted as we speak regarding lower limits where requested. There are about 5 or 6 in the pipeline.

**The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

When can we expect the final report?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

As soon as the Constables and parishioners agree upon them.

**4.11 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:**

In my view, the new incinerator has every indication of becoming a long-term liability for the Island. Will the Minister agree to circulate to Members a list of the significant faults that have happened to date, because of the unusual number that there has been? Also, will he explain how he could guarantee that the Island will not be lumbered with ongoing costs of repairs arising from faulty design or manufacture?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Yes. The significant component failures were mentioned by myself this morning. The tubes have gone. That is all being replaced at the contractor's expense. If any Member would like a guided tour of the Energy from Waste plant, I am more than happy to do that, when they can see for themselves what a superb unit it is. It is not a liability. With anything of this size there will be ongoing maintenance, which is to be expected.

**4.11.1 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:**

I was not referring to ongoing maintenance, which as an engineer I fully understand myself. I asked about the list of repairs arising from faulty design or manufacture.

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

There are no significant problems there. Everything is under guarantee. The whole unit itself - the solid part of it - is guaranteed for 12 years. The tubes are guaranteed for 6 years. As I say, it is an ongoing problem. We are burning waste. It is an industrial unit and will need to be maintained. Other than that there are no significant problems.

**4.12 Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

In answer to an earlier question, the Minister said that emission tests were carried out on a daily basis and were then forwarded on to the Environment Department. Is the Minister content that they fall within acceptable levels and there have been no changes?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Yes, indeed. I think I mentioned they are reported to the Minister for Planning and Environment on a quarterly basis.

**4.13 The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

Will the Minister advise what his department's policy is when private landowner's land suffers slippage on to T.T.S. (Transport and Technical Services) roads and the landowners then claim they are not in a position to pay for the repairs and yet roads are kept closed for many months? What is the policy? How does the Minister deal with this?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

That is an excellent question. As the Constable is aware, there is one such slippage in her Parish, which my team are trying to deal with at the moment. It is a problem with the severe weather we have had of late. Sadly, it is a legal problem, which can be protracted. What may be the ultimate

solution is that the T.T.S. may clear all the debris, but the rebuilding of walls, *et cetera*, is not part of our remit and we do not have the funds to do that. But, we hope to get all roads open as soon as possible.

**4.14 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

I wonder if the Minister could confirm what issues, if they are indeed similar, are afflicting St. Aubin's Hill and the landslip there at the moment.

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Yes, indeed. I believe that is a similar case. I believe works were undertaken there. But, again, there may be legal problems which I had best not go into.

**4.15 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Can the Minister advise us what progress he has made, if any, with dialogue to try and get Romanian driving licenses mutually recognised?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

We rely on our U.K. colleagues at D.V.L.A. (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency) in the U.K. to maintain that. We have not been approached by the Romanian Government via the U.K. to recognise Romanian licences. We would only do so if it was reciprocal.

**4.15.1 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Several months ago I asked the Minister on this same subject. He said they were in talks with the U.K. and they would bring this up. So why has there not been any proactive activity from the Minister's department? There are many hundreds of Romanians in Jersey who can quite happily drive in the U.K. and they seem to have the skill to do it, but in Jersey they are essentially second class citizens.

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

I would disagree on being second class citizens. But, as I pointed out to the Deputy several times, it can only be by approach from the Romanian Government and it has to be reciprocal.

**4.15.2 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Will the Minister give an undertaking to do that?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

My officers have done that. An approach was made and it was decided it would only be done if it was reciprocal.