



Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny

Panel

Bridging Liquid Waste Strategy 2023-26 Review

Witness: The Minister for Infrastructure

Wednesday, 28th June 2023

Panel:

Deputy S.G. Luce of Grouville and St. Martin (Chair)

Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade (Vice-Chair)

Connétable D. Johnson of St. Mary

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat of St. Helier North

Panel Advisors:

Mr. D. Elliott, Indepen UK

Mr. D. Baxter, Indepen UK

Witnesses:

Deputy T. Binet of St. Saviour, The Minister for Infrastructure

Deputy S.M. Ahier of St. Helier Central, Assistant Minister for Infrastructure

Ms. E. Littlechild, Director, Operations and Transport

Mr. D. Berry, Head of Liquid Waste

Mr. T. Le Gallais, Lead Engineer

Mr. A. Scate, Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment

[10:59]

Deputy S.G. Luce of Grouville and St. Martin (Chair):

Okay. Well, a very warm welcome, Minister, to this Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel hearing to discuss specifically your Bridging Liquid Waste Strategy from 2023 to

2026. Before we start, we will just, as usual, whiz around the table to introduce ourselves. My name is Deputy Steve Luce, Chair of the panel. With me this morning ...

Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade:

Mike Jackson, Vice-Chair.

Connétable D. Johnson of St. Mary:

David Johnson, Constable of St. Mary and member of the panel.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat of St. Helier North:

Deputy Mary Le Hegarat, District North St. Helier, member of the panel.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

From your side of the table, Minister?

Assistant Minister for Infrastructure:

Deputy Steve Ahier, Assistant Minister for Infrastructure.

Director, Operations and Transport:

Ellen Littlechild, Director for Ops and Transport.

Head of Liquid Waste:

Duncan Berry, Head of Liquid Waste.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Tom Binet, Minister for Infrastructure.

Lead Engineer:

Tom Le Gallais, Lead Engineer.

[11:00]

Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment:

Andy Scate, Chief Officer for Infrastructure and Environment.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Right, thank you, everybody. Minister, we have quite a few questions to try to get through so we will try to be as brief as we can, although it will be challenging. But anyway, to start with, could you just outline for us, Minister, how ...

Principal Committee and Panel Officer:

Chair, sorry, did you want to introduce the ...?

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Oh, yes, I apologise. We have on the screen at the end of the table our senior adviser, David Elliott, from the U.K. (United Kingdom), who is helping us to scrutinise this waste strategy. Minister, we have just heard from the Minister for Treasury and Resources about financing this plan. Can I just start off straight away by asking you how much work you have done with him and between your 2 departments to develop a financial strategy for this Bridging Liquid Waste document, which is quite extensive?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Well, as you can imagine, we have had a number of meetings. I think we started this process very much on the back foot because I think it is commonly understood that the drains have been underinvested in for quite some time. I think there has been a common recognition perhaps across the piece and across the Assembly as well that we are all suffering as a result of that. So it was not quite the battle that we were expecting. I think we were almost pushing at an open door, that there has been an acceptance that the money needs to be made available. The team have made a very, very good case for it and I think going forward we are going to get the support we need.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

What are the future meetings likely to be in order to inform the Government Plan, which will shortly be being put together? Are you expecting to have future meetings and to discuss how much you are going to need?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Yes, it is an ongoing process to fine tune exact requirements, but I think there is a fairly good understanding and acceptance of the actual sums involved.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Deputy Gorst hinted that you had been sent back to develop further the business plan. Certainly, your proposals thus far have been accepted, but are you advanced with those business plans to inform a much more extensive case?

Director, Operations and Transport:

In this case for the Government Plan we have submitted the detailed strategic outline case that we were requested to by the Treasury, which sets out our funding requirements and funding needs for the next 4 years. So at the moment, as part of the Government Plan process, there are conversations I think back and forth with our Treasury colleagues as they are asking those questions and we are in the middle of that process at the moment.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Can I just pick up on the 4 years? Clearly, that is the term we are talking about. Is that strategic case projected any further, given that these sort of infrastructure assets are really longer-term assets?

Director, Operations and Transport:

Obviously, our strategy goes longer term. It is just the format of the cases to do with the Government Plan that they ask for the 4-year funding. I know that our Treasury colleagues are looking at doing some more longer-term capital programming, but that is not what they have asked for from us for this year. I think that something that is probably definitely needed is looking at our long-term capital planning across government of what we require over the next 10 to 20 years on that funding scale, but as part of this process we are asked to provide the figures for 2024 to 2027.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Is there not a danger that we just go from year to year providing short-term plans and we never get around to doing that long-term planning? Maybe that is a question for the Minister. It is quite a political question.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

We have a fair assurance for the 4 years. It is very difficult for us to guarantee anything beyond the political term really, is it not? There is such a backlog that our focus has to be on the short to medium term to play catch-up if you like. There is an acceptance here. We were just chatting outside about how important it is to make sure that it is embedded for the long term to make sure that the whole sequence is completed. But as I say, there is only so much we can do at any given point in time and the only thing that we can guarantee is really what happens within this parliamentary session, if you like, period.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Something we spoke to the Minister for Treasury and Resources about, Minister, was the potential in the future of moving to a U.K. type system where waste and water are combined together. Is that something you are actively working on?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

It is, but it is very much in its infancy because it is a fairly major change. It has fairly big implications, so that has to be handled very sensitively. But I think at some point in time that is probably an inevitability, I would say.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

How do you come to the priority list of where you are going to go? We have been speaking in the last couple of minutes about short term, medium term and long term.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I am happy to answer that in principle, then I will hand over for the more specialist background details. There are 2 elements. There are elements in the infrastructure that have to be addressed at various points because they have deteriorated to the point where they need work. The other side of the priority list is fulfilling housing needs on a prioritised basis. So those are the 2 elements and I will hand over again to Ellen, who can give you a little bit more chapter and verse on where those pinch points are.

Director, Operations and Transport:

Do you want to go?

Head of Liquid Waste:

Yes, I am happy to. Effectively, we are looking at our asset condition as part of the strategy and on the other side we are looking at where the population is growing and where we need to expand the network for population. For things like asset integrity, we know that a number of our rising mains need replacing. So that is just the direct rising main which pumps to First Tower, and also our First Tower rising main that pumps up to the sewage treatment works. We are working very closely with our colleagues at SP3 on the future population predictions in the Island and the spatial strategy and where they are going, and they are really leading us on where we put these strategic storage units. So, for instance, at the minute they said their top priority is the Maufant area. It was the north and west of the Island but now they are saying the top priority is the Maufant area to put some strategic storage in to allow that to grow initially.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

That is, I have to say, quite a surprise to me, certainly reading the reports as you have alluded. The indication was that the west of the Island would be the point that was going to be under the most amount of pressure, literally and metaphorically. So to hear that Maufant is an area which is top of the priority list is quite a concern. Minister, something that has been suggested to us is that we may

have here in your document more of an asset management plan than an actual strategy. How would you view that statement?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Under the circumstances they are the best part of one and the same thing, are they not? That is what we have to be doing at this point in time.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Do you feel there is enough strategic work gone into this document, into the medium and long term of how we might, for example, use sustainable urban drainage to reduce the amount of rainwater that goes into the sewer or some ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I know the point you are alluding to, but I think we have to come back to what we said in the beginning. Because everything has been delayed for so long and there is such a compression of essential work, the emphasis here has to be on bringing ourselves back to where we should have been had we been properly invested. So in any situation you have to work on priorities, do you not, what is short and medium-term priorities? You can be looking to the long term but you have to get back to where you should have been. That is really what this document reflects is bringing us back up to date. Perhaps I am being too defensive but I feel the need to be because ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I am going to jump forward to a subject which is a long way away from where I was going here, but you are talking, quite rightly, about improving some of the infrastructure we have because we have rising mains that need replacing in First Tower and all these areas. Is there a possibility that we should look at something quite major inasmuch as you do refer in your document to a second sewage treatment works? Would it be better to be thinking right now about saying: "You know what, if we had a second or third sewage treatment works we could avoid a lot of this upgrading", which is going to have a huge amount of disruptive effect on the Island's traffic and road network? Should we be looking at quite radical alternatives to avoid that?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I am happy to hand over to the team for the detail, but in my own assessment the time it would take to develop that whole process and to initiate it and to get it completed we would run into too much trouble. I come back to the point that I think the team have identified what needs doing in the short to medium term and that is what we have in this plan, which we have called a strategy. You can call it what you like, but there is only so much resource and I believe that resource has been well deployed up to this point in time in coming up with this strategy. But I do not know if anybody ...

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

In terms of just digging into the technical issue, which either Tom or Duncan might answer, we seem to have the option of attenuation tanks being spoken about - obviously there is a timeline in getting those in place - versus a satellite sewage treatment works. Have those been considered in any way, such as are being used in the U.K., in Scotland and East Anglia, we understand? Modern methods suggest that this might be a way to go forward and I would suggest that in terms of implementation there may not be much in it. I just wondered ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I will hand over to people who know better than I do.

Head of Liquid Waste:

I think from our point if we build a satellite sewage treatment works, we would rather build it of a certain size because small package plants are really hard to manage - we have discovered that with Bonne Nuit - and they can quite easily become ... the biological system could be knocked out. For instance, we have a café there and when that comes on it takes a bit of time to acclimatise it. So I think to be a reliable, proven system it needs to be a certain size or above. So for now we have said that the easy priority is to get it to Bellozanne for treatment. I think if we split it off round the Island we would probably still need to expand the network because we have so many different pinch point areas. You would still need to expand, say, at St. Brelade and St. Peter, even if you put the sewage works at Beaumont or St. Aubin's or somewhere. You would need to still expand the network so I cannot see it being any savings.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I think what I am trying to just understand is if you are looking at emerging technologies, of which there seem to be quite a few, it is easy to get locked into what we have, but we are looking at emerging technologies in other places and the question I ask is: can we take advantage of those to our benefit? It is something maybe to be considered.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I just want to return to financing, Minister, because let us get these finance questions dealt with and out of the way before we move on, if we can. When are we likely to see a final, fully costed, detailed programme of works for the duration of this proposed strategy? We do have some numbers in here but are they the final ones?

Director, Operations and Transport:

Those figures have been amended just because we have been changing the programme of what we can bring forward. When we did that, that was looking at 2022, getting funding. We prepared the strategic business case, which has detailed funding requirements for 2023 to 2027 and the schemes that sit below that. We will be happy ... it is in draft format at the moment, but following the discussions with the Treasury we would be happy to share that with the panel.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Have you had the moneys that were proposed last year for this year? Are those moneys coming forward in the way they were proposed in the 2023 Government Plan approved last year?

Director, Operations and Transport:

We are still in advanced negotiations with our Treasury colleagues, so there are projects that we are starting this year and we have been told that the money will be allocated subject to some final approvals. So we are expecting that. We are expecting funding this year to continue to develop the projects from 2023 but those budgets still have not been allocated from our Treasury colleagues yet.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

So, to be clear, the moneys that were voted for in the 2023 Government Plan last year ...

Director, Operations and Transport:

Yes, we have those, sorry.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

You have those?

Director, Operations and Transport:

We have those.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay. I just wanted to ...

Director, Operations and Transport:

But that is not money relating to these projects that were included within the documents that we are looking at here. That is business as usual.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

One question that we put to the Minister for Treasury and Resources was that a lot of work has been done for this year's Government Plan. Why were more of these financial issues not highlighted for

last year's Government Plan, do you think, inasmuch as you had some moneys allocated but it does not appear that the warning signs were there last year for this strategy?

Director, Operations and Transport:

From the infrastructure team we did submit business cases for additional money last year. It just did not get approved from the Council of Ministers at that time, so since then we have done a lot more in developing strategy and having further conversations. At the moment now you are starting to get more support for getting some of that funded.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I have to say I am possibly partly responsible. We did not come into office, as you know, until July and it was like raining concrete blocks in terms of timing, in terms of finding out what departments needed what and, to be fair, most Ministers found themselves in a position where, particularly as new Ministers, you do not have a full comprehensive understanding of your department in those initial weeks. Twelve months on, it is a very, very different scenario.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I think I can empathise with that situation. Minister, do you feel your loins are girded to make a good attack to retain your budget for this coming time? Because there will be arguments and the hospital usually wins.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

This is world war 3 and I think the team know full well that there is an urgency and that we are not going to back off at all. As I say, had I been quite as aware as I am now a year ago, we might have put up more of a fight, but we are certainly not on the back foot this time, for sure.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

I am going to follow that with a question that I asked the Minister for Treasury and Resources, in so much as do you feel that the Council of Ministers have a good grip of what sort of situation we are in and that this is a high priority, even though some may think differently and that this is something that affects everybody?

[11:15]

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Hand on heart, I can say I think there is a full understanding and I am not papering over any cracks there. I genuinely think they do understand.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

This is not a subject that people want to talk about?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

No, no, I mean there have been presentations to the council and at the end of that I think people know. Yes, I think they are fully aware that it has been going on for too long.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

You will know, Minister, because you sit on the Council of Ministers, that every Minister will come forward with urgent funding which is desperately required for all sorts of projects throughout the economy. Do you have a view on what you might have to do if you cannot gain sufficient funds to run this programme?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

If we run into trouble I think we are going to be knocking on your door because I heard you say that you were going to give comprehensive support for this because you believed in it. That is why I think we will not get too much push back on this at all, genuinely.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Do you think there are other trade-offs you might have to consider if you cannot find the final funding? I am alluding to ... I may as well be straight with you. Is this something which you ... if you do not get the money from Treasury, do you feel that there is a case to be made for going out to the public and saying: "Right, there will be a charge, a waste charge" or something like that?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I think the urgency is such that we do not have the time it would require to put that in place to get cracking with this. In fairness, we have been given the assurances that to get this under way there is no problem. The issue of charging is not going to go away and that has to be dealt with, so we need to be looking at that. But from a personal perspective it is my view that the public have paid a certain amount of tax for drains in their ordinary taxation. As I say, perhaps I am speaking out of turn here, but if charges were introduced they should be to reflect the undercharge that has been in place for quite some time and what is needed to deliver what is over and above what they are already paying for, if that makes sense.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Do you think it should be part of a development cost? Should an additional charge be part of a development cost?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

What I would really like to do is have charges that reflect the extra money, not the day-to-day money that people are already paying their taxes for but the stuff that they have not paid within their taxes, to bring us up to speed and to keep us where we need to be. Does that make a certain amount of sense?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I am just thinking in terms of new development and I am talking about the St. Peter developments particularly. We have a massive development there. Should the developer be trumping up some of the costs involved in ...?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

It is arguable that there should be a contribution but what you cannot have, I do not think, is a situation where new developments are paying for the underinvestment level that affects the whole Island, if that makes sense. So in terms of introducing a waste charge, that should be across the piece to reflect the level of underinvestment there has been and the future amount of money that is going to be needed to keep it up to spec so we never find ourselves in this awkward position again.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

But if there was, shall we say, a mitigation tank built, whether it is Maufant, St. Peter or wherever, would the developer be expected to pay for that?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I am not sure that we could do that either because you are upgrading a region that has been underinvested, if that makes sense. What we did have a discussion about before is the possibility if somebody - for example, a private developer - wanted to build 10 houses in a particular area, if the capacity exists to take that overnight, it could be conditional upon them having their own in-house tank that has sufficient storage to ensure that they could have a timer and that waste could be pumped into the system when it is not under pressure. These are things that we are looking at as ways of overcoming the short-term problems that might exist while we are upgrading.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Is it your view, Minister, where you have a situation like that ... and the Constable refers to St. Peter, but we could have a development of, let us say, 100 houses in St. Peter. The only way of connecting that to the main drains would be to have an attenuation tank for those 100 units. The cost of that attenuation tank is only having to be borne because the main itself cannot take the capacity, so who bears the cost of that attenuation tank? Should it be those residents that are buying the houses or

should it be Government because Government are forcing those developers to do the attenuation in order to use the ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

We are getting into fine-tuning and I suppose that discussion ... and if we are getting into more technical matters, the question there could be asked: if it is a big enough development could the attenuation tank there form part of the upgrade, which takes pressure off the system? As I say, those sort of questions would have to come back to the team. They are beyond my pay grade to start answering. As I say, small issues a developer might say: "I do not want to wait 2 years for the sake of the cost of a tank. I can pick that up myself and run with it." But if it is a major development, it is 100 houses, the implications are slightly different.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I think the concern is, of course, that in cases like the 100 houses they may well be affordable units that they are trying to keep as cheap as possible to help young families get on the housing ladder, and one of the first things they come up against is the cost of an attenuation tank because the main has not been ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Yes, we are strolling into territory that we have not tackled, but my initial response to that would be that there would be a discussion to be had. But it does run a tiny bit more complicated because there are effects on the network and as to whether it can take 100 houses pumping overnight. There are lots of different elements to that and they are not questions that can be answered comprehensively at this stage.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Broadly, just picking up on that point, obviously the downhill side is crucial because you almost have to work bottom up. Is the downhill from St. Peter, downhill from Maufant, is there much work to accommodate this pumping out overnight?

Head of Liquid Waste:

No, effectively there is no work overnight. That is the whole point. Because you get basically a diurnal flow pattern into the sewage treatment works. We get a big peak in the morning and in the evening, and the idea is just basically to take those peaks into the storage tank and then it can pump 24 hours down to lower down, so there is no downstream upgrades needed in that area. These attenuation tanks are largely we are talking 5,000 to 8,000 cubic metres. It is almost a quarter, a bit more, of that than the cavern size, so we are talking about very large structures, although they will not be visible. They will be underground tanks, but they will be big tanks.

Director, Operations and Transport:

Sometimes you can split the tanks and have 2 tanks together in the line, so there are different options depending on what space is available.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Minister, all these solutions are quite major. Just attenuation tanks, as Duncan has just been talking about, it is a sizeable piece of infrastructure. Are you confident that you can deliver this plan in the timescales that are written down?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I have to rely entirely on the experts so I am going to hand that question over. These people in my view appear to know their job and if they are saying they can, then I have to assume that they can.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I am looking at officers and just thinking ... **[Laughter]**

Director, Operations and Transport:

I think in infrastructure we have a really good track record of delivering our capital programme and our projects. I think from an organisation point of view what we would like is guarantee of funding so we can resource up to make sure that we have the teams and our contractors who are going to support us to be able to develop and deliver those schemes for the next 4 years. It helps us, it gives us that confidence, but it also helps the industry that are sometimes struggling to get those resources. If they know that they have this work in the pipeline, they can build up their teams in order to be able to support that in the future. From our side of view, we have a lot of framework agreements in place, which helps the procurement process and speeds that up. We have a lot of experience of this. I think it is just that guarantee of funding so that then we can go on and deliver it. There will always be challenges where on these projects there are things that you do not plan for that can cause delays, but generally we do a lot of work up front to try and mitigate that and make that happen. When we are pulling together our capital programme, there is a lot of detail for each of the stages of the programme, looking at the timescales, when they are going to deliver that, resources. We plan that to a lot of detail.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

When I asked the question I was assuming that the money was available because we pressed the Minister for Treasury and Resources quite hard on the reputational damage to the Island of not undertaking this work. As we have all alluded to, nobody worries about drainage infrastructure until the moment it stops working and then everybody gets extremely irate very, very quickly. But just to

get back to the physical size of some of these infrastructure projects that we are talking about doing in a number of places throughout the Island, they are considerable and quite time ... a lot of time going to be needed to construct them, large tanks, obviously not going to be on States owned land. At the moment it looks like the States would have ... are the States going to have to purchase some land in order to build tanks of these size underground? I presume that is something we will have to do.

Director, Operations and Transport:

Some of these can be built on States-owned land and they will go effectively underground. So you can still do things above that and certainly that is some of the schemes that we are looking at at the moment. Some of that is on States owned, some of that is on private, as we are looking at that. It is a shame that we have not probably got the picture to share with you of what these kind of cylinders look like, unless Tom has something to hand, as I look over at Tom, if you do not mind him sharing this, Chair.

Lead Engineer:

I may or may not have some of ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Are they prebuilt cylinders then? I was assuming they would be square structures like ...

Lead Engineer:

Well, square or circular. We could be looking at tanks in the order of 20 to 30 metres in diameter, 20 metres deep, quite large, but then they could be, as Ellen mentioned earlier, smaller tanks which are built in phases as well to meet the demand. Or we could be looking at oversize sewers as well. That could be the other way of doing it, but long length, couple of kilometres' worth of large diameter sewers to attenuate the flows and then slowly bring it into Bellozanne sewage treatment works.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Going back to the tanks, would you envisage the land above to retain and continue agricultural use?

Lead Engineer:

I think it would require access to ... because you would have pumps at the bottom to maintain and service, but it could be used for other uses, amenity uses and stuff like that. That is what they have been used in the past, but then again you still have an odour issue, which can again be controlled and managed.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

But if you were having, like as an example, the site at St. Peter, you would be able to have those tanks on site surely where the houses were being built, or not?

Director, Operations and Transport:

It depends, but there is still the issue of how do you manage that and is it financially more viable to have lots of small tanks for each of the different developments and for them to manage that package, or do you have the bigger tanks that the Government own and effectively manage that look after the whole area and that might be the most efficient longer term? So there are different things. As the Minister said, we are looking at what is possible for certain developers and if they have their own package plant or whatever it may be and the attenuation and that is viable, then yes, we will support that.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Are tight tanks still on your radar?

Director, Operations and Transport:

Tight tanks are. So we do have a number of tight tanks in the Island and the future planning applications, so people can do that and that is not something we would ever hinder.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Because at one time it was considered quite onerous from the householder point of view who had to pay for emptying them on a regular basis. I do recall the flow of complaints about that. I just wonder if it is something that should be discouraged rather than encouraged.

Director, Operations and Transport:

What we are trying to do is discourage obviously septic tanks and suchlike. To move to tight tanks is the right environmental thing to do. As you say, Constable, it is the cost of managing that and the cost of paying for those to be emptied. That is not the perfect solution for householders but again it is a good solution if we have lack of capacity on the network.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Would you consider taking that emptying facility more in-house than perhaps at the moment? I know it has diminished from what it was. Is it something you would consider taking back as part of the department's responsibility if tight tanks were to be encouraged?

Director, Operations and Transport:

I think that would have to be looked at probably in the longer term, looking at the funding piece for what and how we fund liquid waste in the future. We do offer 2 free services to empty that out, but

obviously tight tanks get emptied more than that. We can review the subsidies that we provide but I think that would be part of a wider fiscal review.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Do you think it is right, Minister, that moving forward people are now told that tight tanks are an option you would prefer them to use? Let us use the example of a house that is built alongside a main, the sewage main, and it was built 5 years ago. They connected up and they pay their taxes like everybody else in a house. The same size house is being built now and they are told that they cannot connect to the main because the main is over capacity. They are told that they have to invest in a tight tank. Obviously, instead of just a pipe going into the main, they have now got the cost of the tight tank and the ongoing cost of emptying that tight tank. Is that fair that because the sewer is now at capacity that members of the population should be charged additional fees?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Strictly speaking, no, it cannot be excused as being fair, but we do live in a real world and if people want to do developments before the service is available, I would suggest that that probably is a cost that they have to incur, in the same way as if you are a developer and you are building 10 houses and you want to bring it forward and the network development is not running in parallel with what you are doing, then you have the option of putting a tank in, albeit temporarily, to deal with that situation. So yes, there is a slight injustice there, but that is the real world situation.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay. I just want to ask a couple of technical questions - well, technical to me anyway - about how we have come up with our priority list. I think this will probably be targeted at officers. As we said just now, Maufant was a bit of a surprise to me, certainly, that it has jumped up the list. Can I ask how we monitor our pumping stations for their ... how many times they get close to capacity or at capacity or over capacity and how that work is monitored?

[11:30]

Head of Liquid Waste:

We have 2 systems. We have our telemetry system, which looks daily at the system, any pump failures, how the system is working, the levels going up or down in the stations, and we also have what we call a network model. That network model is what we feed in if there is any new developments to see if the system is at capacity or not. So in this model we can put in, say, we will put a housing estate of 15 people there; what is going to happen to the system? The model will tell us it will pop at that manhole there or it can take the capacity. So that model dictates where we are going in the future and that is verified by local flows and rainfalls, that model, as well.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

So we have telemetry from all our major pumping stations which allows us to see where we are getting close to capacity or, as you said, over capacity?

Head of Liquid Waste:

Yes. Our telemetry gives us, yes, the live information. If we are going to spill that will tell us, but we use a model to inform us of future development trends, if you see what I mean. But 24/7 we can see where we are in any pumping station, what failures there have been, what level it is at, what level ... and throughout the treatment process at Bellozanne what flows are going through there.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

So that data is the data that you are using to decide where you need to go next as a priority when it comes to a pump or a pipe or whatever?

Head of Liquid Waste:

Yes, that data feeds into the model, effectively, yes, and tells us where ...

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

So Maufant has gone up the list. Is that because of the potential to develop St. Saviour's Hospital as a housing site and also the hospital complex?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I do not think the hospital has played any particular role in this. Correct me if I am wrong, because that has been a relatively recent development.

Head of Liquid Waste:

It is still not finalised, yes.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

It is in its very early stages.

Head of Liquid Waste:

I think that is the affordable housing side and that is where our colleagues at SP3 have said that that is now coming up as the higher priority. Unfortunately, things have moved slightly since ...

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

So it has to do with the development potentially of the old St. Saviour's Hospital site?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Yes, which will be further affected if we get permission to progress with the health village on the northern part of St. Saviour.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

That is what I was asking. That is exactly what I was ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

It is a cumulative effect that is developing over time.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Can I ask would the sewage from St. Saviour's Hospital go through Maufant or would it not go through Five Oaks?

Lead Engineer:

It joins the network at St. Martin.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Maufant is Five Oaks?

Lead Engineer:

Pumped in through Five Oaks.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Maufant is Five Oaks, is it not, really?

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Well, no, I do not think so.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Just picking up on the ...

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Okay, sorry.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

... information coming from the S.T.W. (sewage treatment works) and just looking into surface water, is it possible to identify the amount of surface water when you get a spill going through the works in terms of the differentiation between ...?

Head of Liquid Waste:

Yes, it is, only by ... well, we know our total flow coming into the works so we know what we call the dry weather flow is coming to works and when it rains we know the flow increases by X amount, so yes, although that is through multiple sources. Obviously, a lot of town is still on the combined system, and where we can we are trying to take those surface water schemes off to give us more capacity. For instance, we are looking at Beach Road and Dicq Road currently to try and separate that because that goes all to the pumping stations, so that it saves capacity there.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Is this part of your forward funding, separating foul from surface water?

Head of Liquid Waste:

Absolutely, yes, that is a big part of our strategy to keep on with surface water separation schemes.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Where is the worst part to the Island for mixed ... well, amalgamated drainage?

Head of Liquid Waste:

The town area, unfortunately, Deputy, which means it is the most difficult area to try and separate because of the amount of properties. Generally, parts of the rest of the Island, they are all fully separated, we do not have any combined services. It is really in town, and that is due to the age of the town structures that we still go back to Victorian sewers. So it is getting more and more difficult to separate the surface water because you are going into more and more developed areas. That is why we are trying to do the areas like Le Dicq, which is out of town, which is still connected, the easy wins where it does not cause too much disruption.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

What is the worst part of the ... there was some reference to saline and seawater ingress into mains. Where is the worst part of the Island for that happening?

Head of Liquid Waste:

We think it is probably currently along the south coast we seem to get a significant amount. We have taken quite a few ... we have found quite a bit of saline coming in and solved it, but on big tides we are still getting it, mainly from the south coast, south-east coast.

Lead Engineer:

South-east coast there has been a large amount of work to rehabilitate sewers in that area and continue that as well by relining, so the sort of no dig options, to try and line the inside of pipes and prevent seawater ingress or groundwater ingress.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Has that been successful?

Lead Engineer:

That has been successful.

Head of Liquid Waste:

That has been successful, but it is an ongoing project when we get big tides. Another one in your areas, Constable, is the bulwark. So we know there is a little bit there but they are quite deep sewers to try and find where that is coming in. So I think we have solved a lot of the saline ingress but again it is an ongoing thing. We put the saline probes out in the system to monitor where it is coming from during big tides.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay. Obviously, as you say, in town is a bad area for mixing rainwater and sewage because of the historic nature of the sewer. We are aware, as I know you are also, that sustainable urban drainage systems are now quite common in the U.K. It is not something that we see on the Planning Committee very often these days, but there is a huge potential to take rainwater out of the sewer by trapping it in very many small receptacles around houses and flats and what have you, wherever that might be. Is that something that you think we should be elevating up the priority list in order to try to attenuate some of this rainwater before it enters the main?

Head of Liquid Waste:

For any new developments we try not to take surface water into our sewers if we can, even if there is a surface water sewer in the area. So S.U.D.S. (sustainable urban drainage system) has to be our top priority to get rid of the surface water, but unfortunately not all areas S.U.D.S. or soaking away will work, when it is clay areas in the Island where it will not soak away. But our top priority, yes, for new developments is S.U.D.S. and dealing with surface water on site and not putting it to any surface water sewers.

Lead Engineer:

Some of the identified surface water separation schemes involve sort of St. Mark's Road area, Belmont Road area, where it is all parts of St. Helier largely built up and difficult to get any sort of surface water drainage going on.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Picking up on St. Helier, is the cavern of sufficient size? I know it is big, but I do not know ... was it built on the principle of a one in 10-year flood or one in 5-year flood? What was the basis on which it was constructed and the size dictated by at the time?

Head of Liquid Waste:

I think it was based on the number of spills at the time we were getting. We were getting ... a number of spills. We have capacity for 25,000 cubic metres there now. As part of the new sewage treatment works upgrade we are installing additional storm storage capacity, so effectively a mini cavern of another 5,500 cubic metres at Bellozanne, so we are having additional storm storage during the wet weather, the principle being that we will use Bellozanne first. We will fill that tank up, then we will slow the flows down when it is raining heavily and fill the cavern up. Because Bellozanne will be a lot easier to clean the tanks out than the cavern because you do not have to go underground.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Whereabouts on the site is that going to go?

Head of Liquid Waste:

That is where the old activated sludge plant was, just north. So we are actually converting that part of the existing concrete structure into a storm tank so we are trying to get best value for money out of that.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

This was not part of the question plan but I think I must ask the question. We recently had, a couple of weeks ago, an incident in St. Aubin's Bay with discharge not meeting the quality that one might have expected. I found it interesting to see that one of the reasons was the low flow going into Bellozanne because of the dry weather. Is that something we should expect into the future with climate change and more extremes of weather, whether that is hot or dry or wet or cold?

Head of Liquid Waste:

I think it will be, absolutely. As you said, we are going to see some more rainfall events and drier periods, too. We are not sure, we think this drier period maybe is why we are getting some more ammonia into the system because it is spending so long in the system and in these hot conditions, which has affected the treatment works slightly.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Is it not impossible in the future we might need to store some water at Bellozanne to introduce into the flow to just keep it at a more consistent sort of level?

Head of Liquid Waste:

That is a good point. We have looked in the past at some of the outlying pumping stations, the very small ones at the end of the chain, where the levels are not dropping that much and it is staying stagnant quite a while, going off and potentially adding some surface water into that to keep it fresh. So there is potential in the future we could look at specific sites. I do not think we could necessarily do it at Bellozanne because the flows would be so low, but on our small satellite areas if we do get some septic sewage it is certainly a possibility to keep ...

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Is there some advantage, in fact, to allowing surface water in to flush out the pipes? I think that was the case in the past. There can be advantages in having the combined system. Is that something that merits analysis to reduce the need to spend too much on surface water treatment?

Head of Liquid Waste:

We do get a flush out during heavy rainfall events. The trouble is if you do go combined system you are having to vastly oversize the sewage treatment works in order to cope with it and have lots of clean water going through.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I suppose the question is: can you actually divert surface water into foul sewer if needed to flush out?

Head of Liquid Waste:

There is certainly potential for that, yes, in a number of areas. What we have looked at is, yes, groundwater source or streams in some outlying pumping stations that could keep the sewage fresh in some of our smaller stations.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Just linking on to Bellozanne and the new treatment works, does that obviate the need for taking an outfall further out to sea, which has been discussed in the past? At one point there was talk about taking the outfall well offshore. Is that still the case or is that now not necessary?

Head of Liquid Waste:

At the time we found it needed to be so far out it was not necessary and for what you gain ... it needed to go beyond ... we did some modelling in a bay beyond St. Aubin's Fort ...

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

It was down by the Sillettes at one point, which was a significant investment. I just wondered if the new treatment works obviated the need for that.

Head of Liquid Waste:

Because it is such high quality, the effort, we ... yes, our priority is not on the outfall, it is on our infrastructure. We are not currently looking at extending the outfall.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I suppose what I was trying to understand is whether we are - touch wood, we have not seen it this year - going to get sea lettuce as a result of the new sewage treatment works this year, which is obviously a problem for St. Aubin's Bay.

Head of Liquid Waste:

Unfortunately, we cannot rule out sea lettuce because we are only one of a number of sources of nitrogen in the bay. I think last time we looked at it we were roughly 50 per cent compared to what the land runoff was, and the whole bay of St. Malo is very high in nitrogen as well. So that is a high ... we do have a nitrogen consent limit on us and what we have agreed with the Environment Department is once the sewage treatment works is built we will monitor it for 5 years and see if any further treatment stages need to be added. So they are monitoring it under the Water Framework Directive to check all the marine life.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

So subsequent to the construction of the new treatment works, which has really only just come on stream fully, do you anticipate as much mitigation as can be done so far is being done and will that have the effect of reducing sea lettuce? I know you cannot guarantee it, but clearly there must have been an intention in the new sewage treatment works to try and do that.

Head of Liquid Waste:

It should try and ... our nitrogen limit going out is lower so we should try and ... it should hopefully reduce the sea lettuce, but not being the only source we cannot categorically say it will not occur because you could get the warm spring and summers, you get these algal blooms and the nutrients build up over winter. If it is not from us, it is out of our control, effectively, unfortunately.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

While we are talking about nitrogen, Minister, I am sure you will be aware - I know you are aware - of the extensive work that has gone on by the agriculture industry to reduce nitrogen specifically for the potato crop. I am sure you would agree with me on congratulating them on the work they have done, but there are still certain areas of the Island where the soil types allow the nitrogen to enter the water, the streams and the reservoirs quite easily. Can the farmers do yet more or do you think we are probably about as far as we can go with reducing nitrogen?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

It is always difficult to say you cannot go anywhere else, but I would say any advantages now would be very incremental. It is sort of the inverse proportion, is it not? The more you have done, the less places there are to go and the more it costs you to achieve those last little bits of efficiency. One thing that has happened is the industry has changed and I think the local production is down already by 30 per cent compared to what it was 10 years ago. So there is 30 per cent less crop growing; there is 30 per cent less nitrogen in use anyway. Whether they can then utilise the land base differently to avoid those areas or not I do not know because, as you will know, some of those lighter soils are what gives rise to earlier crop, which is quite fundamental to the profitability of the industry. So, as I say, we are getting into the very, very fine-tuning parts here.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Certainly, the panel have seen some information in this last week about the levels of nitrogen in streams and in reservoirs and in boreholes, et cetera, and it certainly shows the correlation between the reduction in the amount of potatoes grown and, as you say, the amount of fertiliser used. But the good news, of course, is that we are down below the level of where we would need to be alerted and certainly below the E.U. (European Union) level of 50, which is very good news. Let me just get back to your proposed plan, Minister.

[11:45]

We were talking about climate change and we were talking about extremes of weather there. What other considerations are you giving to other work to mitigate risks posed by climate change? I am thinking specifically about attenuation of flood water, for example. We have recently seen floods in the Grands Vaux area. How much work are you doing in this plan to scope out the intended groundwork for long-term plans?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I do not think there is any particular work here that addresses the type of floods that we had at Grands Vaux. That is pretty much a separate exercise because that is the only area where there was serious flooding. That really relates to volumes of water that pretty much ... I do not think there

is any amount of drainage you could put in place that would handle that. If you are unable to use a reservoir for flood management, then you are going to be periodically in a situation where you could get further flooding. So I do not think that it is something that can be ... that sort of thing cannot be dealt with through standard drainage works or a drainage plan of any sort.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

You say that but would the floods at Grands Vaux have been alleviated by a bigger drain between that area and the sea?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I stand to be corrected and I think Ellen might pull me up on this, but I think the drainage that we have if everything is clear can handle ... is it 1.8 metres a second? We can upgrade a 70 or 80-metre run to run it to 2.4 cubic metres a second and I think if I am not wrong we were something like 5.8 to 6 metres a second that were being generated at the height of the flood. So as I say, unless you are going to open it up and put a 4-metre pipe all the way through and hope that the tide is out when it gets ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Yes, I cannot disagree with your thought process, Minister. It does seem to me that the way to deal with flooding in Grands Vaux is to make sure we do not build houses in areas of Grands Vaux that are going to flood.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

There is that, or you accept that you use that relatively small reservoir as a management tool. I have to say that that was very much where my thoughts were at the time of the flooding itself. I look out the window and I sort of look at how dry things are and we have not had rain for 5 weeks, and I know that Jersey Water is now going to be looking back the other way and saying: "Yes, we told you so. We only have so much capacity here. Do you want people to run out of drinking water?" So we have a very, very difficult balancing act to play with here and it may well be that those particular houses do, as Andium has suggested, have to get rebuilt so that when there is a flood they do not get flooded. It is a case of looking at the economics of it and the balancing of people's well-being and the amount of disruption that people have to suffer. Because it is easy for us to sit here and make decisions like that if it is not us that are being flooded. So it is a complicated one and it is a work in progress.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

It is, but have you done any work or are you giving any consideration to developing an integrated Island water plan? Obviously, you have said you are in initial discussion with Jersey Water, but

irrespective of the commerciality of it all, should we be looking in a much more holistic view of the whole water issue?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

It is commercial and it is financial. There are so many considerations. It is a really big piece of work. We are looking at it. We have all accepted that ... even I think Jersey Water have accepted that they have to be talking to us, which they are now doing certainly in regard to the Grands Vaux situation. But there is an acceptance that there is a bigger piece of work to do. But make no mistake, that is going to take time. That is going to be a complicated bit of work.

Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment:

If it helps, the Minister for the Environment is leading on a piece of work which is a water strategy for the Island and that is looking at water resource, water quality fundamentally. It will reference infrastructure as to whether infrastructure changes can help water resource or water quality, but again I think we do need a wider look at ... it is not within this strategy but just that water infrastructure, whether it be coastal defence or inland measures to help the Island become more sponge-like and slow water flows down when we need to.

Head of Liquid Waste:

Which we are reviewing our surface water management plan currently and looking at all our ... we have a number of flood plain areas where they may need to be developed or managed better or attenuated further.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay. At the last quarterly hearing, Minister, we asked you about lodging this for debate, this strategy for debate, and you said because it was essential works you did not feel so. Given the scale of the impact of what we have been talking about this morning and the wide range of stakeholders, do you not think that it would be a more acceptable approach to come back to the Assembly and just ... even if it was an in-committee debate where we could just discuss many of these issues?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

They are very detailed issues and I am not quite sure of what we would really be looking to achieve. In this sort of environment, where it is very focused, I can see the point of the discussions, but widening that to the Assembly in this level of detail I am not sure how advantageous that would be.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay. Have you had any discussions with the Comité des Connétables at all on these issues?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Not specifically, I have to say.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I think one of the points really with regard to the parishes is the effect of building additional drainage infrastructure in terms of what is going on under the roads, where they all tend to be, particularly with regard to some which may be under parish roads. Clearly, the specific parishes would need to know if there is going to be a massive disruption there because the consequence on local residents and parishioners will be significant. So when you get to the stage I think the Comité would be very pleased to have discussions on that.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I think it is essential that as we get closer to doing any of these programmes the parishes have to become highly involved.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

In terms of your costings, if you have to either put in a surface water sewer or enlarge a foul sewer, the effect on roads is, as I said, significant. Do you factor those costs into the whole exercise?

Director, Operations and Transport:

Yes, we do. We look at that and the reinstatement of the roads on all of these projects. Obviously, we would be doing that consultation, certainly with those parishes, moving forward. What we will also try and do is, again subject to getting the funding - sorry to go back to it - we will tie this in also with all our road resurfacing programmes and suchlike, so where we can dovetail one ideally we would want to be doing this work before we go and do some of the road resurfacing in those areas as well.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Co-ordination is always a challenge.

Director, Operations and Transport:

Yes.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Obviously, as you have said, disruption on roads is something which the public get very wound up about. Have you factored in any public consultation when it comes to some of these projects? We

have spoken about if you have spoken to the Comité, but obviously was a public consultation ... would that help to inform the developments and the direction of travel?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I do not know what the plan is going forward. I do not think you have done any of that work as yet, have you?

Director, Operations and Transport:

Not at this stage, no.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

It is a little bit too distant. But it is the intention to, yes, where necessary.

Director, Operations and Transport:

Yes, on all those projects we then have the consultation and make sure the stakeholders are aware of what those projects are. Ideally, with a lot of drainage projects we try and cause as little disruption as we can. So where we can find the right amenity and ground space, hopefully it will cause as little disruption as possible. Because I think we all know that people have got a feeling that nobody likes all the roads dug up at the same time, so I think we have to manage that very carefully across all of our different infrastructure projects.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Again, it is time, but I think we always say on Planning Committee that consultation before you do anything like this is never wasted. Having the Comité, the individual Constables and the populations of the certain area on board before you start is absolutely vital in helping you, I am sure, and can only be beneficial when it comes to the timing of projects.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

That is a fair point.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Getting back to the detail on those specific projects, when would you anticipate or have you started the tendering process for those works that you have identified in 2023 and 2024?

Lead Engineer:

So the West Park surface water separation scheme, that is currently out to tender at the moment. We will be going through with the planning application soon as well. Then some of the other larger strategic schemes we are well on the way with. We are developing the design and doing further site

investigation. For example, First Tower pumping station rising mains, that is one which we are looking at as well in terms of the works required to facilitate that.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

All those initial works, those tendering and doing all the up-front work, that is all factored into your timing to allow you to have a finish date for whatever work is finished, the pipe is in the ground or the pump is working? Do you work back from that and make sure you are not going to fall behind on the timeline?

Lead Engineer:

That is right, yes. We build quite a detailed programme on that to make sure that some of these key infrastructure schemes are delivered.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Just picking up on West Park, does the construction of a hospital at Overdale have any influence on that?

Lead Engineer:

No, it is a surface water separation scheme. The scheme is designed to accommodate further surface water separation scheme or further developments in that area. So, yes, it is primarily a surface water separation scheme with a new outfall to separate those areas which at the moment surface water is going down to First Tower pumping station and treated at Bellozanne.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

So a separate outfall to sea?

Lead Engineer:

To sea, yes.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Okay, in the West Park area?

Lead Engineer:

In the Lower Park area we reutilised an existing groyne so we are not introducing new structures on to the beach. We are utilising the existing one to construct a new outfall.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

When it comes to tendering for work and civil engineers, it says in the report that there is a lack of contractors on the Island. Is that genuinely your belief?

Lead Engineer:

We have a real struggle with contractors on the Island and we work very closely with the ones which do exist to try and maintain a strong programme of work so that they have continuity of work to deliver as well.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

How much of it is done in-house? I mean, effectively you have a contractor perhaps digging a hole but at one point most of the sewage stuff was done in-house, was it not? Is it all contracted out now?

Director, Operations and Transport:

We do have a D.L.O. so we do a lot of work in-house and that is probably most of our day-to-day business. Some of that work gets charged to capital. I think for any of our big projects then we would normally contract that work in and we would get additional civil support. So yes, generally we can do a certain amount to a certain limit, then obviously we have to get the contractors to support us.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I was just going back to the ... are you satisfied that you have enough contractors in the pipeline engaged to deliver this plan on time? I cannot stress that enough, in my personal view, how much large-scale infrastructure work there is to do. The size of these civil projects scattered around the Island, it is going to take quite a workforce and a team of people. Are you happy that we have those people on-Island?

Lead Engineer:

Some of the larger, more complex schemes, so, for example, if it is a large storage tank, you are looking at U.K. specialists for that scale of project. Similar to something like Phillips Street, shaft 3, that was delivered by a U.K. contractor because it is specialist stuff. It is specialist deep piling which again, like ourselves in-house, we only have so much capacity. The local supply chain has only got so much capacity in terms of what they can do in terms of expertise.

Director, Operations and Transport:

The local supply chain also say to me often we need a guarantee of what your long-term work is so we can resource up to it. They cannot just turn on the tap. So I think we have to do better within government of looking at how we plan long term to be able to support the local industry.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

It goes back to the point that really 4 years is not enough.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

No, that is quite right, and if you can show a 10, 15, 20-year plan of works ahead, a company or a commercial whatever it is, civil engineers, will gear up in order to tackle that work if they are confident they have a workstream coming down, which is absolutely right. Minister, changing the subject slightly, we received a written submission from a private individual in Trinity who asserts that: "One in 4 houses in Trinity are not connected to the mains sewer. There are many families who find themselves in a similar situation. There is no mention of addressing our predicament, only accommodating new development." What would be your response to that when the Planning Committee are approving large-scale developments and yet individual people out in the countryside are not getting permission to connect to the main drains?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I was hoping we were going to get to 12 o'clock before that question came up. **[Laughter]** As it happens, we had a briefing before for an hour and that letter was the last thing we looked at, so I only managed to scan it through. So in terms of Trinity, I am reliably informed that we have some specific problems. It is probably better for one of the team to talk about the specifics in Trinity.

Head of Liquid Waste:

For every application we get we do a drainage impact assessment now for any new housing application or connection and that again looks at the model to see where there is capacity. Unfortunately, Trinity is at capacity and it is not without building another strategic storage unit in the West Hill area that we could start to accept the flows in because it is a bit of a bottleneck up there.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

So the capacity issues in Trinity are ... the problem is West Hill, we need more storage in West Hill?

Head of Liquid Waste:

We need another strategic storage unit, yes, at West Hill, yes.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Sorry, you might need to explain it because I am not understanding that very well. So the issue in Trinity is not an issue in Trinity itself, it is an issue in the north of St. Helier?

Head of Liquid Waste:

Apologies, I think it is both. It is upstream. It needs some upsizing in the area and it also needs upsizing downstream of the sewer as well. It is a double attack.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

For example, the Villa Le Veq(?) (11:59:50) pumping station is at complete capacity so there is no potential for any new development in that area at the moment?

Head of Liquid Waste:

That is at capacity, yes, correct.

[12:00]

Deputy S.G. Luce:

So even one individual house is too much?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

That letter did give rise to us having a more extended conversation about individual tanks with timers that possibly could be installed if somebody wants to put in their own tank. I know for my own property we have 3 family properties going into one tank that is pumped out. That could become an option, could it not?

Head of Liquid Waste:

Absolutely. Like we are saying, currently all pumping stations, private pumping stations, just basically operate on float switches so there is no control on when they are discharging. In the discussion we had, perhaps if they could discharge out of hours during lower flows that could be a potential we could look at.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

There might be an answer. We come back to this business of injustice: is it right that somebody has to pay for a tank when somebody else gets a free connection? But as I say, we as a family have 3 properties in close proximity. We wanted to connect to main drains. We were told we could not. So we had to pay way leave agreements to go across land and put in our own pumping station. It is the way of the world, unfortunately. You cannot make everything completely fair for every individual. So if somebody wants to do something and they want to go ahead of what the state can provide, then there are some options for them to consider. Is that a fair comment?

Deputy S.G. Luce:

But before I go to the Constable, can I just ask this question, Minister? We could for the next 10 or 15 years insist that people put individual pumping stations on their property to pump out at night.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Yes.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

That will not alleviate the problem in 15 years' time of when these properties all start pumping out at night but the pipe is actually full at night.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

That would be a major problem if we were not going to set about implementing the plan that we have in place at the moment. So in 10 to 15 years' time I would hope that ... I may not be there but I would hope we have a very much more efficient system than we have at the moment.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

So the strategy, if there is a strategy, would be in the short term attenuation ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

These are just management tools ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

... or pumping at night and that type of thing to allow you to upgrade the system so that in 15 years' time there is a lot of capacity and people can go back to connecting straight?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Exactly. What we are trying to do is come up with little ideas that help individuals to overcome problems while we are playing catch-up. But bear in mind ... I see words like "incompetence" and stuff used in relation to this team and I find it ... I understand why people see it that way but I find it quite annoying, working with what I can see is an exceptionally competent team who are already delivering some very good work in terms of the sewage treatment plant and so on and have been under-resourced for a very long time, taking the blame for a state decision not to fund the department properly for a decade. Do you know what I am saying? So it is a pretty difficult one. That is why we are on the warpath and saying: "Enough".

Deputy S.G. Luce:

You can understand why an individual might get a bit upset because the department does not hold the data on how many applications to join the main drains have been made and does not know that number.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

It is not that there is no data, there is some data, possibly insufficient.

Head of Liquid Waste:

Yes, I think it was asking for every single application what has been ... and we do not have ... since the year dot we do not have all of that. We know, for instance, in Trinity we have not allowed any applications, we know, in the last 5 years because it is ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

But how many people have applied in Trinity who have been refused a connection? I am not asking you to come up with that answer today, but the question was: why does Government not hold data on how many people have applied and been refused? The answer may be nobody has been approved but how many people applied? But there we are. Sorry, Constable of St. Mary.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

No, sorry, I do not resent Trinity holding the floor on this one, but St. Mary is even less well served in terms of public drains and it is not a question ... in my own property we were on a 10-year plan to connect, about 20 years ago, and then it has been shelved. We went on a private link. Is it the case that all the northern parishes no consideration ... I do not mean this rudely, but there is no question of there being any extension of the mains drains to the present properties?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Could I just suggest, and it is just my observation, the more disparate the properties are, the more spread out they are, the more difficult it is, the higher the unit cost for any connection. As I say, we come back to the business when you have limited funding you have to put that funding where you get the best impact for your spend. Sadly, when you get out to St. Mary your properties are very well spread out. You have a very low level of population. Connecting each individual house is going to cost 10 times more than it does to connect a house on the outskirts of St. Helier.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

So it is not in your current plans to extend it to the rural areas at the moment? The budget does not allow it?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I would not say ... is there a plan that goes right to every house? I would not ...

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Well, not every household, improvement generally?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

As I say, the further up the network you get, the more the unit cost per unit is ...

The Connétable of St. Mary:

I appreciate that. So there is almost an embargo on the people that will not make it ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

No, the priority is making sure that the areas where there are real pinch points do not break down. So it is a little bit fire-fighting.

Director, Operations and Transport:

We do get £1 million a year to do foul sewer extensions, so where the network is able to take that we are looking at doing some extension schemes as well. So there are some and they are in the pipeline as well.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Okay. Thank you.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

The last few questions, Minister. I wondered if you could just talk us through to what extent the plan or the proposed strategy has been informed by looking at liquid waste strategies from other jurisdictions.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

That is something I have to hand over. The background to this has ... have you got anything on this?

Head of Liquid Waste:

I think we have reviewed a lot of other areas. We reviewed Isle of Man, for instance. We looked at Guernsey. Guernsey is very different to us. They do not offer the same full level of treatment as we do so it is not a direct comparison, whereas Isle of Man are more similar. Isle of Wight we have also looked at as well. But I think mainly this strategy is concentrated on our network. The last strategy looked ... the 2013 strategy was we need a new sewage treatment works. It is great we are building

that now. We have the capacity. We have capacity for 140,000 people going forward. We now need to be able to get those flows in from the future development. At the time of the last strategy, all the development was in the town area, whereas now it is a lot more spatial around the Island so it is a lot bigger challenge for us now. We are having to look at all the areas around the Island now. It is basically development in multiple locations.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Can I go back before we finish to Maufant suddenly coming up the list? I am just looking at the existing plan. We had some maps and you identified pinch points and what have you. I appreciate that Maufant was one of those pinch points identified in the south and the east, but it featured very much down the list. Can I just go back and ask again: the reason that Maufant was suddenly jumped up the list is because the policy team have identified ...

Head of Liquid Waste:

I believe that was ... I would need to double check, Tom, but I think that was purely down to working with ...

Lead Engineer:

Yes, since the strategy was produced obviously there has been the affordable housing briefs and guidance which has come out. We have had a lot more information come back in terms of the timing of some of those developments. We had information early on when we were preparing this strategy in terms of ... and that is why they were only identified as north and west and south and east. But now we have more information there we have a bit more visibility and we are trying to adjust the priority of these larger schemes, these key and emerging schemes, in order to accommodate those developments.

Director, Operations and Transport:

So although Maufant has come up the list, the priority is still in the first 3 or 4 years at St. Peter airport strategic storage cell, West Hill, Five Oaks and Les Quennevais. So those are the projects. They are still happening.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Oh, okay. So those are ...

Director, Operations and Transport:

Then Maufant is next on the scheme.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

... still above Maufant.

Director, Operations and Transport:

Yes, they are still above Maufant.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

I got confused between Maufant and Five Oaks. I was just thinking Maufant was just a little bit up from Five Oaks.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I did wonder because it sounded to me like you came in this morning and suddenly said ...

Director, Operations and Transport:

No.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

No.

Director, Operations and Transport:

West is still ... but that has moved up from where it was before.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay. Well, as the Deputy of St. Martin and Grouville I am very relieved to hear that. **[Laughter]** It is interesting to hear how your strategy is affected by advice you get from the Population Office and from policy ... not ... well, population as well, I guess, but how those inputs are affecting your thinking about where you need to be upgrading your mains in more of a priority. So that is ... The final question then, Minister. This is a Bridging Liquid Waste Strategy that coincides with the Bridging Island Plan, and yet the Minister for the Environment has made it very clear that he would like to extend his Island Plan out for another 6 years after 2026 to make it a 10-year plan. Where would that leave you in this strategy if the link between the 2 was broken by the Minister for the Environment?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

If that did happen we would possibly have to review where we are, but I do not see that as being an immediate problem. The immediate issue is to get on with this, get it under way, and once it is all

running then we have time to stand back and look at where we go forward, if that makes sense. It is a case of prioritisation.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Yes. For me, so far as I was concerned, and I am sure other members of the panel, we had a very long debate on the draft Bridging Island Plan and we were told very clearly it was to 2022 to 2026 and I think the debate happened on that basis. It is quite a surprise to see that the Minister for the Environment would seek to stretch that plan out for another 6 years, given there are so many challenges in the new Island Plan, not least the sites for housing and these drainage issues.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I cannot speak for the Minister for the Environment but I think what you will probably find is that there is such a backlog with planning that if everybody stops work now to do another long-term Island Plan when they have just finished doing the Bridging Island Plan, there will not be time to do their day job. I would just suggest that as being a possible reason and probably out of turn for me to make that suggestion, but I can see ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Well, I will not go there but ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

As an observer I can see a certain logic to it.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

... I think you would find that the policy team would be the ones that would develop the Island Plan and not the planning team. There is a distinct differential between the 2. We will not go there, otherwise we would be here all day. I will just ask the panel if there is anything else they wish to bring up before we ...

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Not at this point from me.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

No.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

No.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay. Minister, thank you very much and thank you to your team for coming today. I am sure there are going to be further questions. We may need to pull you back in again for a short period of time in a few weeks, once we have had time to get our evidence together, but for today thank you very much. We will call it a day.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Thank you for keeping us on our toes.

[12:11]