

7. Deputy G.W.J. de Faye (The Minister for Transport and Technical Services) - Statement regarding the implementation of the waste strategy

The Deputy Bailiff:

We move next to a statement which the Minister for Transport and Technical Services will make regarding the implementation of the waste strategy. Minister.

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

It has become apparent, following consideration of an appropriate location for an enclosed composting plant by the Council of Ministers, that there is a level of confusion among States Members relating to the procedures for the implementation of the waste strategy. Accordingly, I would like to lay out the existing position and indicate the future direction of the process. The solid waste strategy was debated and approved by the States in July 2005. Within that strategy the preferred site for the new Energy from Waste (EFW) Plant was Bellozanne with composting and reuse and recycling facilities located at La Collette. When the report and proposition for the strategy was lodged, Deputy Ben Fox of St. Helier, lodged an amendment seeking to move the EFW plant from Bellozanne to La Collette. Following debate of the amendment, Deputy Fox agreed to withdraw it, following agreement with the former Environment and Public Services Committee that a full assessment of both Bellozanne and La Collette would be undertaken for the EFW plant. The agreement read: "The Environment and Public Services Committee gives an undertaking that it will carry out a full evaluation of the Bellozanne and La Collette sites. The evaluation will consider health, cost and technical issues and will, of course, include an environmental impact assessment which will include full consultation with potentially affected residents. The Committee undertakes to bring a report on the evaluation to the States in order that Members should be aware of the situation before tenders are invited for the new Energy from Waste Plant and before the Committee submits an application to the Planning Minister. The ultimate decisions on the location of the Energy from Waste Plant will be a matter for the Planning Minister to consider and in the event of La Collette being the preferred site the States will have to consider rezoning the land." It is important to note that this undertaking to bring a report back to the States was given for the EFW Plant only. As the detailed evaluation of both sites commenced it soon emerged that the EFW Plant could go at La Collette adjacent to the Jersey Electricity Company site occupying the site originally earmarked for the Compost and Re-use Recycling Centre. This location allowed for the EFW Plant to be connected to the JEC (Jersey Electricity Company) chimney and other associated services within the existing power station building. In the light of the very significant advantages and cost savings that accrue from the use of this site, the former Environment and Public Services Committee instructed the department to stop the evaluation of the Bellozanne site and concentrate on La Collette for the EFW Plant. Therefore, for the avoidance of doubt, I think it is my responsibility to make Members aware of that development. That decision then prompted reconsideration of the location of the enclosed composting operation. This resulted in a recommendation being made to the Council of Ministers based on a weighting determination, carried out by a cross-departmental officer group, to use a States-owned site at Warwick Farm with La Collette - specifically La Collette 2 - being assessed as a close second choice. On a casting vote, as has been heard this morning, the Council of Ministers determined that an extra political factor should be added to the weighting assessment. The La Collette site had the advantage of allowing construction to be completed in the shortest anticipated timeframe with the consequent termination of the odours emanating from the current operations and the associated relief of nuisance for the Havre des Pas residents. That new recommendation from the Council of Ministers to the Minister of Transport and Technical Services has been accepted and the location of the enclosed composting plant at La Collette will now be subject to the usual planning approval procedure. The Re-use and Recycling Centre will continue to be located at Bellozanne but will be substantially enhanced and improved. Once the EFW Plant is constructed and the

development site has been cleared, the Re-use and Recycling Centre will be transferred to the vacant plot at La Collette, again, subject to planning approval procedure. To summarise, the only decisions - albeit important ones - relating to the waste strategy that are still before the States are, firstly, the decision on whether to relocate the Bellozanne EFW Plant to La Collette and, secondly, the approval of a final tender for the EFW Plant. Thank you, Sir.

7.1 Deputy P.J.D. Ryan:

In his statement and also during question time, not so very long ago, I think there were several to do with green waste composting but I think it was the question from Senator Shenton... The Minister confirmed that before recommending Warwick Farm initially, as a site for green waste composting, his department carried out much, if not all, of the preliminary work that the Planning Department would require in order to assess Warwick Farm for suitability for green waste composting. In the light of this, is he prepared to submit a request for outline planning permission for both La Collette and Warwick Farm at the same time, at least at the same time, possibly even Warwick Farm immediately to be followed, as soon as possible, by La Collette, thereby minimising any possible delay - which is in his statement here - and providing his department with a speedy indication of the likelihood of planning permission being granted and where the most suitable location might be. At the moment only temporary planning permission exists at La Collette. That is my question but the last tiny bit, Sir, is that at the moment perhaps he can confirm that only temporary planning permission at the moment, exists at La Collette and that, in fact, he will need to carry out some work down there which, hitherto, his department has not done. So, in fact it could be the other way around. In fact it could end up with more delays by asking for La Collette to be approved. Thank you, Sir.

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

As I think can be elicited from the length of the Deputy's question, this is not a simple matter. I think it probably would be inappropriate for me, or the department, to submit joint planning applications but that is certainly an issue I will discuss with my Chief Officer and see what precedent, if any, exists for that. In respect of - I am not quite sure what the Deputy meant by: "temporary planning permission" - I am not sure that such a concept exists but I think I have to say that it is important for Members to realise that there are 2 separate levels of decision-making going on here. The first one was an entirely objective appraisal by a cross-departmental officer group who added certain weightings to all the various elements of the decision-making in terms of location assessment: in other words, traffic impact, environmental impact, impact on neighbouring properties, et cetera. I think it was incumbent upon me to present the Council of Ministers with a single specific recommendation even though slight adjustments of those objective weightings used by the officers would have easily tipped the balance towards La Collette being the clear recommended location. However, I made the recommendation I did at the time. I think it is important to understand that the Council of Ministers, again - albeit in a very balanced voting outcome - decided that the political element within the decision-making was more important than the objective assessment. In other words, it was more important to get on with the job and it was also clearly important to recognise the policies we are now understanding from the new Environmental Planning Sub-Committee, where we are clearly seeing a stronger view being taken to developments in the countryside zone and, by equal measure, Warwick Farm also had significant problems with the impact on the number of neighbouring residents. Therefore, I think the outcome of that decision-making process is a clear one and that is that La Collette is the better of the options.

7.2 Deputy J.A. Martin:

I thank the Minister for his statement. I was not at all unclear... I did know that it was just the Energy from Waste Plant that came back to the House. I would ask him that the political factor I presume he is meaning, is the annoyance to the residents of Havre des Pas of the composting site

being left as it is. But I do not think the House or the residents realise that to have this solved quickly they were going to end up with all the waste in Jersey at La Collette. The other political factor is that, if this does come back as a private member's bill, it should be considered that if all the waste goes there - and would the Minister confirm - there will be much more property needed to be purchased probably. It was told yesterday that it will be the whole of Commercial Buildings so that the traffic can get backwards and forwards for all of the waste and everything else that is going to go down there. Finally, given that we have been told today that the decision for where anything is sited rests entirely with the Transport and Technical Minister, is he absolutely sure - he has gone against his department's advice, he has gone against the environmental impact assessment and everything else - that he has made the right Ministerial decision? I am sure - and I hope that the Minister is - is he big enough to change his mind, Sir?
[Laughter]

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I have forgotten the first element of those questions. I should point out the development of Commercial Buildings is nothing to do with me, that will be probably a matter for WEB (Waterfront Enterprise Board) and possibly the St. Helier Urban Taskforce, if it extends its remit in that particular direction. I am aware that, in due course, the current Weighbridge bus site is due to be developed and I am of the understanding that there will be some significant changes to traffic flows around the Fort Regent Tunnel area in due course. But we are looking several years ahead. "Am I big enough to change my mind?" Well, I would have thought that would be obvious because I have changed my mind already. I did support the officer's recommendation for Warwick Farm but, as I continue to reiterate, it was an extremely close run thing and even a modest adjustment of the objective weighting balances would have favoured La Collette as opposed to Warwick Farm. I can only say I was happy to recommend it. I am pleased with the outcome not least of which because a siting at Warwick Farm would have practically been on my constituency in St. Helier No. 3. So, that is something of a relief in fact.

7.3 Deputy P.J.D. Ryan:

Does the Minister not accept that by moving the Energy from Waste Plant from Bellozanne to La Collette it would make a fundamental change to the background of the States' decision to site the green waste and recycling at La Collette and does he not think, therefore, that it would be advisable, if not technically necessary, to bring this decision back to the States for a final decision?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

The location of the EFW Plant will come back to the States for a final decision but I think States Members should be aware that the composting and recycling facility was always going to be at La Collette as you will have understood from my statement.

Deputy P.J.D. Ryan:

Could we ask the Minister to answer the question that I put to him?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

Would you care to re-put the question, please, Deputy, I clearly misunderstood it?

Deputy P.J.D. Ryan:

Does he not think that the possible change - and I accept that the change has not been made finally by the States yet - to move the Energy from Waste Plant from Bellozanne, as a recommended site, to La Collette fundamentally changes the background to the previous States' decision. In other words, all waste processing at La Collette was not on the cards when the States made their decision to site the green waste composting and the recycling activities at La

Collette. Does he not accept that that is fundamentally changed if we decide to place energy from waste at La Collette as well? This was not in front of the States 6 months ago when we debated it. Does he, therefore, accept that it would be advisable - politically, socially and in the interests of fairness to the whole Island and its residents - that, in fact, he brought it back to the States for a final decision rather than following the technically possible route. I think that we all accept that he does not have to bring back green waste composting.

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

Sir, I think some Members are struggling with how Executive Government works [Laughter] and are making a bit of a fist of it. The Deputy is clearly at fault in his memory of the original waste strategy debate and, I think, doing considerable disservice to Deputy Ben Fox who brought an amendment suggesting precisely that La Collette should be a consideration. So, the idea that this was not in States Members minds at the time, I am afraid, is absolutely incorrect. I think, by now, Members will begin to understand that there are some considerable merits in co-locating all these various operations on a large industrial site that is a significant distance away from neighbouring properties. The fact is, if one was to attempt to draw a radius line from the location of La Collette to the nearest neighbouring property, the length of that line would, almost certainly, be longer than virtually any other location that you could find in the entire Island. I would also remind Members that one of the key developments, in terms of how the assessments changed, was a realisation after closer study, that the strata below the intended site for the EFW Plant was different to that which had been anticipated. It is, in fact, rock strata which allowed a whole re-evaluation of the construction process to take place as opposed to being built on the soggy reclaimed soil of other areas at La Collette 2. Therefore, an element in the decision-making process was significantly altered and reflects an ability to make an enormous cost saving.

Deputy P.J.D. Ryan:

I take it that is a 'No' then.

The Deputy Bailiff:

I am afraid to say that time has expired on that matter. Very well, we move on to public business.