

3. Questions to Ministers without notice - The Minister for Transport and Technical Services

The Deputy Bailiff:

We now move on to Questions to Ministers without notice. The first Minister taking questions is the Minister for Transport and Technical Services. Senator Ferguson.

3.1 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Would the Minister like to tell the House how far behind the work on Victoria Avenue is and when he expects it to be finished given that there are a number of important events like the motoring club event, the Battle of Flowers and the air display this year?

The Connétable of St. Brelade (The Minister for Transport and Technical Services):

The work on Victoria Avenue is slightly behind schedule in that cold weather held up proceedings to a certain extent, but my department are well aware that the events are programmed to take place on the avenue and are content, I was told yesterday, that the works will be completed in time.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

I am sorry, Sir, the Minister did not reply. When does he expect it to be finished?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I do not have the latest available date, but I can certainly suggest that it will be finished in advance of the Battle of Flowers, which is the primary Island event.

3.1.1 The Deputy of St. John:

Victoria Avenue also. Given the contractor is from off-Island and he is using all the facilities, i.e. the parking bays along Victoria Avenue, as an open workshop, could he tell us what return the States are getting for this given other contractors would have had to have supplied workshop facilities offsite? Can we have the amount we are losing in revenue for those parking bays and also the rental that he is receiving or his department is receiving within the contract?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Any contractor working in that area will require a laying out area which the parking bays are providing. The contractor is a Jersey registered company although I understand has subsequent English ownership, but the employees involved are local and, therefore, the local economy is benefiting as a result of this. In terms of lost revenue from the car parking spaces at the town end, I suggest that would be the same for whoever held the contract for the job.

3.1.2 The Deputy of St. John:

The Minister mentions that the employees are local. Could he give us a breakdown of how many employees are on site and also the number which are local and the number which have come from off Island? I am sure that the majority are not from on Island.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

No, I cannot give that information now but I am assured by the contractor that local staff have been employed in line with the requirements of the fiscal stimulus regulations.

3.2 The Connétable of St. Mary:

Could the Minister just explain to me one more time, please, in what way he considers the refuge for cars which are leaving what is commonly known as the Hamburger car park - travelling eastwards along Victoria Avenue - is adequate bearing in mind that you cannot get a whole length of a car inside the refuge? Because I am afraid that this particular question is bringing

serious marital disharmony in my household every time I pass that junction with my husband in the car. I would be grateful for his advice on how to respond.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Could I recommend that the Connétable suggests her husband buys a shorter car? [Members: Oh!]

The Connétable of St. Mary:

That was a very tongue in cheek question but I did expect a serious answer.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

In seriousness, I think there is adequate space for one car which is notably angled as it approaches the eastbound carriageway. That formed part of the design process for that area. In fact, there is no record of accidents having taken place there since that took place.

3.3 Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

Just going back to the initial question, bearing in mind the vague answer that the Minister gave, can he inform the House, as he has intimated that the work will eventually be done by the Battle of Flowers and bearing in mind this money was allocated from the stimulus package, if there is going to be an overspend due to the delay?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Inevitably, in any engineering project there are things that crop up during the way. I am not aware of this point of whether there will be any overspend, although I would anticipate there could well be. There was an issue with drainage kerb blocks coinciding with some services running under the avenue which inevitably results in an alteration to the specification, and that may have caused an increase in costs. I am not aware of others at the moment but I can assure the Deputy that the department keeps a very close rein on the expenditure down there and we are confident that the job eventually produced will be satisfactory.

3.3.1 Deputy A.E. Jeune:

The Minister stated earlier that there is some delay, and I think we can all understand that. How long is that delay and is there a default clause in the contract?

[12:00]

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

As in answer to Senator Ferguson's question, I cannot be specific on the exact time apart from suggesting it will be completed before the Battle of Flowers. Yes, I believe there are penalty clauses within the contract but allowance has certainly been made for cold weather.

3.4 Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

Does the Minister harbour any intention to bring to this House a proposition to allow his department to import waste from any other jurisdictions to be burnt in the new incinerator?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

No, at this juncture, no. Until such time as I get an approach from the Public Works Department in Guernsey I do not feel it appropriate for me to make any moves in this direction whatsoever. At this juncture that department is not mandated to approach us with regard to exportation so there is little point in my department spending any funding on this.

3.5 The Deputy of St. Mary:

Is the Minister under a statutory obligation to keep the main roads of the Island in a safe condition so that accidents are not caused, or does he do it for love? In either case, where will

the money come from given that even the *J.E.P.* has written a leader about this matter and I myself from personal observation can see that the roads are in a very bad state?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Essentially, as a roads authority we are obliged to keep them in reasonable condition but within the constraints of the funding available and that we endeavour to do to the best of our ability. There are always areas that need to be done and they are prioritised as the department deems appropriate.

3.5.1 The Deputy of St. Mary:

A supplementary if I may. If an accident is caused and somebody is injured or killed as a result of defective road surfaces or, indeed, along the cycle track where it can be very dangerous at times - not now but at times - what is the situation with regard to the liability of his department?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I think that would be up to experts in those fields to evaluate.

3.6 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Just following on from Deputy Duhamel's question, with regard to waste from Guernsey, BBC Guernsey reported that the Minister had been in Guernsey discussing waste coming from Guernsey to Jersey. Would he please outline any discussions he has had with the Guernsey authorities and also specifically whether he has encouraged them to send their waste to Jersey?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I have not been to Guernsey at all on this matter. The Minister for Public Services in Guernsey visited us on 5th February - and I have the agenda for that meeting here - together with his Chief Officer. The reason for their visit was really to look at our facility because, as the Deputy or other Members will be aware, there is a proposal to build a facility in Guernsey. They were given a tour round the facility and various other matters of common interest were discussed.

3.7 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Has the Minister received the consultant's report analysing the current Connex contract and suggesting alternatives? If so, will he be putting it into the public domain?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

The Aecon report, which is I think the one to which the Deputy refers, has now been received and is being studied by the department. It will then be passed to scrutiny for further consultation.

3.8 The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

I would just like to refer back to the question of the Connétable of St. Mary regarding the exit on to the avenue from the Hamburger area. I would like to ask him for an assurance that he will ask his traffic engineers to revisit the exit because I too as Connétable am concerned about the exit there and I would like to have his assurance that it will be revisited and we will have confirmation that it is indeed either safe or not.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Yes, I am happy to do that.

3.9 Deputy A.T. Dupre of St. Clement:

As one of the most important roads I think as far as the holiday traffic is concerned - the one from Grouville to Gorey - the road is in a terrible state and it is really like being on a track at the moment. Is there any plan for that road to be resurfaced?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I understand the Jersey Electricity Company will be running a new main through there at some early stage and it would seem inappropriate for it to be resurfaced until that is done. So, my department are aware of that situation and also aware of the poor conditions of the Rue a Don and as soon as those works have been undertaken we will address the issue of resurfacing.

3.10 Deputy J.B. Fox:

I together with 2 others was on a subcommittee for speeding in the Island. I just wonder what the state of progress is, Minister, into implementing some of the recommendations, if not all, that were contained in that report that we produced.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I thank the Deputy for that question and also thank him and his colleagues who were on that committee for producing this very excellent report. I understand as a matter of a day or 2 we have had response from the Law Officers regarding the suggestions that were put forward. I in conjunction with the Deputy and those on the panel am also keen that the results get progressed as soon as possible. I cannot give a date at this moment but I shall endeavour to ensure that we let those involved know as soon as possible.

3.11 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Following on from my previous question, in view of the fact that Victoria Avenue is very widely used for events such as the motoring club event - the old car sprint - in June, did the Minister's staff take account of usage of Victoria Avenue before planning the work and will he agree to check with his officers that they did, in fact, take the agenda for the summer into account before planning the work? Will he come back to this House with it?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I can answer pretty well straight away that the permissions for the holding of events are given by me through my department as well as the work. So the person that gives the authority for works and liaises with the Law Officers regarding the provision of orders works in the same department, so I can assure the Deputy that the department is well aware of the planned activities.

3.12 Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville:

As my parishioners and I have been promised bus shelters along Long Beach by Gorey and Rue a Don area for the past 4 years, could the Minister update us on the current situation, please?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

In a word, no, but I shall ensure the Deputy gets updated in a short time.

3.13 The Connétable of St. John:

Is the Minister aware of any deficiencies in the specification of works when the utilities dig up roads and trench them, when the edges of the tarmac are not resealed properly and, therefore, water will percolate down and when ice forms it will break up the edge of that trench?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Yes, this was a question that was raised only yesterday at the Comité des Connétables and I have asked my department to look into it and will respond as soon as possible.

The Deputy Bailiff:

That brings an end to the first period of questions without notice.