

# STATES OF JERSEY

## SCRUTINY COMMITTEE BLAMPIED ROOM, STATES BUILDING

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<b><u>Present:</u></b>	<b>Deputy Rob Duhamel (Chairman)</b>
	<b>Deputy Gerard Baudains</b>
	<b>Senator Jean Le Maistre</b>
	<b>Deputy Phil Rondel</b>
	<b>Deputy Bob Hill</b>
<b><u>In attendance:</u></b>	<b>Dr Janet Dwyer</b>

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### EVIDENCE FROM:

**Jersey Environmental Forum**

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on

**Thursday, 15th July 2004**

**(12:30:43 to 17:12:37)**

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**EVIDENCE OF JAMES GODFREY, HUGH FORSHAW and DAVID ELLAM  
(JERSEY ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM)**

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Good Afternoon and welcome. Before we start, I have to read you the Riot Act. It is important that you fully understand the conditions under which you are appearing at this hearing. You will find a printed copy of the statement I am about to read on the table in front of you.

Shadow Scrutiny Panels have been established by the States to create opportunities for training States Members and Officers in developing new skills in advance of the proposed changes of government. During the shadow period, the Panel has no statutory powers and the proceedings at public hearings are not covered by Parliamentary privilege. This means that anyone participating, whether a Panel Member or a person giving evidence, is not protected from being sued or prosecuted for anything said during hearings. The Panel would like you to bear this in mind when answering questions and to ensure that you understand that you are fully responsible for any comments you make.

On that note, we had reference back from the person who was transcribing, and they have indicated that some people are not actually speaking into the microphones. So it is vitally important, when you do speak, if you do speak, to make sure that you are fairly close. Thank you.

Yes, and we have Dr Janet Dwyer here, who is one of our consultants. Thank you.

I would like to start the proceedings by asking you to outline, as briefly as possible, what your understanding of the Jersey Agri-Environmental Scheme, as presented in 2002, was, in particular the key aspects of it in environmental terms or any other.

MR GODFREY: Right. Thank you very much. The Agri-Environment Scheme proposed in 2002 did form the basis of the research that we undertook, led by the Environment Department (as it is now). The key elements as presented to us were that it was a scheme comprising of a number of components -- the exact number I cannot remember, but certainly 30 plus components, I should think -- that it was labelled as a voluntary scheme, but conditional upon the farmers being in receipt of any direct aid was that they would take part in the scheme, and that there was a budget attached, which formed part of the request that went to the States as the policy report in 2001.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: In your view, were there any particular elements that shouldn't have been within the scheme?

MR GODFREY: Not particularly. We did review at length ... in fact, actually, I have to say, it is an ongoing process with the Forum. Hugh Forshaw, on my right here, is chairman of a subgroup of the Jersey Environmental Forum who is specifically looking at agri-environment issues, and that subgroup is still meeting and looking through the detail of the various components, but we did receive them earlier this year and there was nothing in particular about them, the detail that we brought up at that time, but it is still an ongoing issue with us.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: And one final before I open up to the rest of the Panel. What, in your view, are the downsides or the drawbacks that have occurred since 2002, subject to the funding not being available?

MR GODFREY: In terms of the scheme or in terms of the environment?

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: In terms of the scheme, yes.

MR GODFREY: Well, the scheme has pretty much been on hold, as far as we are aware. There is very little, if anything, been implemented, which is unfortunate. I think there was disagreement at the time regarding the conditionality of the scheme and the level of funding of the scheme. I know that the two came as a package, but it did seem, particularly at the time when the farming industry, who it appeared that the scheme was very much aimed at, had extremely low profitability at the time. When a scheme was introduced paying only 90% of the cost of implementing any of the parts of it, it would have represented an additional cost to an industry as opposed to an additional source of funding. So that, I think, was one of the main sticking points at the time, and I believe that was later removed in the scheme that was put forward for a funding request at the beginning of this year.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Okay. Thank you. Any Panel Members? Senator Le Maistre?

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: Could I ask a couple of questions which have been put forward from a member who can't be present today? First of all, the Forum, for those of us who have not heard a lot about it, could you describe how you are formed and what is your level of linking in to the Environment Committee, or are you independent? How is it sort of constructed?

MR GODFREY: That is fairly straightforward to answer. In December of last year, there was an environment get-together that was held at La Place Hotel. At around about that same time, the Environment Committee disbanded the La Mielle Subcommittee and the Countryside

Panel, which were two previous groups operating in this area. At the meeting at La Place Hotel, there was a general consensus that the forming of a single environment forum was a good idea, and the Environment Committee took it on themselves to kick that off and early last year advertised for applicants. I have no idea how many people applied, but 12 were appointed and were appointed for a three year term.

We had our first meeting in July of last year and we got together, all 12 of us, together with ... Chris Newton was there and the President of the committee at the time, Deputy Dubras and, having introduced ourselves, we asked the questions about how we were to operate and it was pretty much put back to us that we could operate in any way we liked and we were to be independent of the Committee. The Committee would hope that we worked closely with them and, indeed, we usually have a senior officer of the department (normally Chris Newton) and one of the Environment Department staff acting as a clerk to the Forum.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: The members, do they represent any particular groups, or how has it been put together?

MR GODFREY: The applications were advertised on the basis of individuals. So we are not there as representatives of a particular body. Whether that was taken into account in the selection process, I don't know.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: But the final mix, is it a sort of cross-section of people?

MR GODFREY: It is a very broad mix. If you like, I can go through the names of the people.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: Well, it would be helpful, I think, because it is ...

MR GODFREY: Just to provide that background. We have -- I think it is in alphabetical order -- Charles Alluto, probably known to many of you as the Chief Executive of the National Trust in Jersey; Jeremy Barnes, who is a practising architect; David Ellam, on my left, who is an engineer specialising in waste, agricultural and horticultural waste; John Fa from the Durrell Preservation Trust; Hugh Forshaw, who I have already introduced on my right, obviously a veterinary surgeon and also very active on a number of the local conservation groups; myself; Bruce Labey, who is a horticulturalist; Graham Le Lay, who is a horticultural engineer; Howard Snowden from the Jersey New Waterworks Company; Mike Stentiford, a very well known local ornithologist; Andrew Syvret, a marine biologist; and Kirstie Walker, who is a teacher.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: So it is very broad.

MR GODFREY: A very broad mix.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: Yes. I think that is helpful, because it is not a body that is very much in the forefront, in terms of publicity. So, I think, for the record, it is actually quite useful to understand the mix and how it was formed. So, if I could go on to the questions now. First of all, were there elements in the Agri-Environment Scheme which you feel are of higher value than others and, if there were a small number maybe, what would they be, in your view?

MR GODFREY: Probably the easiest way to answer that question was in the early part of this year we were considering the detail of the previous scheme and the large number of elements. The Environment Department rather led us to the view that there wasn't going to be sufficient money available in terms of a decision conferencing bid and that they were going to focus the previous scheme into a tighter area. They suggested four, I think it was, components -- five components -- in particular to focus on, which was public access, hedgerows, slurry management, energy audits and buffer zones, nitrate buffer zones. The Forum felt that those did represent a good focus to kick a scheme off with.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: And, although they were narrow in themselves, actually each one of those elements has a broad implication.

MR GODFREY: Yes. There were a number of reasons, I think, we came to that opinion, as was set out in our position paper, not least of which was that they would represent a good focus in terms of public perception as something beneficial that was being done to enhance the environment; and also there would be a rapid response in a number of them. So, to put it in a slang term, there would be plenty of bang for the buck.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: My second question is that that is sort of the beginning of a scheme, but what do you feel is going to be the impact of non-implementation if that was to be a factor that we have to accept for the next period of years? I mean, it could be five or ten years or whatever it is?

MR GODFREY: I think it is quite evident that the agricultural industry has been going through a period of very severely low profitability and we have relied on the Agricultural industry in the past to be very much the custodians of the countryside environment and a lot of investment

has taken place historically really by the agricultural industry through its own profitability. When that profitability is in jeopardy, the investment naturally does not take place. The Forum, I think, is concerned that that can't be allowed to continue, or shouldn't be allowed to continue, and that investment does need to take place. If the farming industry themselves can't afford it, then it is quite right that funding should be put in from other sources.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE:           What would be the impact though of non-implementation for a number of years?

MR GODFREY:            I think it would be a missed opportunity.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE:           Yes, but what we are trying to do is to understand, from a lay perspective, how that would impact on the countryside and the environment in particular?

MR FORSHAW:            Could I say something here? I think, when we were looking at this problem, one of the things that came out is that there is a scarcity of information on what is happening to other agricultural land. We know from the basic statistics that land is coming out of agriculture. We don't know precisely what is happening to it, but there is a lot of information that suggests that a lot of agricultural land is being left fallow, unmanaged. What, I think, we would envisage is that, unless the economic climate changes, there will be more and more of this land, this marginal land that farmers, it is just not economic for them to work. This land will then be left to go wild in an unmanaged way, so that our general environment, particularly the environment for locals and for tourists, might appear less rewarding perhaps, given that there will be a lot of scrub land and the whole environment will be less rewarding for those people who live here and for those who visit here. So I think it is what is happening to the land and the land being left that is the big worry.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE:            So, just to complete that, it falls into two categories and presumably that is land which will not be worked and, therefore, will not be managed at all alongside land which is being worked which could be managed in a way which actually gives ... well, is termed environmental goods delivering at a greater cost than actually the industry can afford. Is that fair?

MR GODFREY:            Yes. I think it is also important to recognise that agriculture is going through a period of great change. Previously farming in Jersey has been very much a case of high input/high output. As that process changes, there are opportunities to move away from that

and diversify agriculture so that the industry for the given output will utilise a greater area of land but in a less intensive manner. That in itself is beneficial to the environment.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Yes. Deputy Rondel?

DEPUTY RONDEL: Mr Forshaw, you mentioned the land being left fallow and marginal land etc. Have you got any evidence to this effect?

MR FORSHAW: In fact, in our paper, one of the things that we highlight is that we have figures for land that has come out of agriculture over the last few years. It is, I believe, 7.6% in the last five years, but it is 26% over the last 34 years. We feel that the evidence is there, but it is not easily accessible; and one of the things that we suggest is that that should be looked at so that we can define where this land is going and what is happening to it. At the moment, it is actually very hard for us to tell. Perhaps with some input from the States, those figures could be looked at and some information could be gained from that, because we understand that the figures are there, but they are not open to public scrutiny at the moment, or they are not readily accessible. Perhaps "*open to public scrutiny*" is actually the wrong phrase, but they are not readily accessible at the moment and there is a great opportunity to do some work there to find out what is happening to the land.

DEPUTY RONDEL: And in your opening speech, Mr Godfrey, you mentioned conditionality. What is your interpretation of conditionality?

MR GODFREY: I think the Forum took the view that the best way to achieve results is education and encouragement. Doing it by compulsion, doing anything by compulsion, usually achieves a less good result. So, at the time of the previous scheme, as was suggested, the conditionality element came in that, unless farmers were taking part in the Agri-Environment Scheme, they wouldn't receive any direct support. That environment scheme only contributed 90% of the cost back to the farmer, so actually taking part represented an additional cost to them.

The other element, of course, that we feel is important is that the Agri-Environment Scheme isn't just aimed at farmers, it is also landowners themselves who are a major factor in this. So the way the scheme is designed should encourage landowners to also take a lead in it, whether it is off their own bat or through their farming tenants.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Deputy Hill?

DEPUTY HILL: Yes. Deputy Rondel has stole my thunder. I was going to come to Mr Forshaw, when you were just talking about the land, you know, the amount of land, which is either in use or out of use, and the one thing we have found -- I don't know if Scrutiny feel you heard the other day -- is that people are coming forward and saying this is what they believe, but what you we trying to do actually is obtain evidence. I think you allude a little bit to having some idea, you have some evidence, but would it be the intention of your Forum to carry out a proper audit of land availability, of what is actually useable, what is marginal etc, because, you know ... maybe if I leave that as my first question.

MR GODFREY: I think we are clear where we get our evidence from. Under the 1974 Agricultural Land (Control and Sales and Leases) Law, there is a requirement for land that was, as I understand it, purchased after that date to be let to bona fide agriculturalists. That is the source of the information. But that land actually only covers somewhere around about half of the agricultural land in the Island, so it is an imperfect database in the first place. So we looked at that land, and the agricultural returns shown that decline in occupation of farming. We highlighted very clearly that we thought that was an inadequate system of monitoring and that should be made much more robust. There is a concern ... there is a lot of anecdotal evidence about farmland not being farmed, but there is very little fact to back it up. That is an area that urgently needs addressing before any decisions are taken as to what to do with agricultural land on that basis of it.

There is a concern in the farming industry -- and, again, it is purely anecdotal -- that there are landowners who are not making it easy for land to be rented, because they perceive if there is a declining farming situation in the Island it might open up opportunities for them to do other uses with their land. So there is this element. Farming is probably one of the occupations that can pay the least for renting land. It may be deemed to be in the landowner's interest to see that agriculture does not want his land, but there is very little evidence to supporting this and this was of great concern to us.

DEPUTY HILL: Could I ask then, will it be part of your brief to carry out that audit, or have you got it in the hands of someone else to look into it, because I think, as you have said, it is quite an important element. If we did have an Agri-Environment system or scheme, would we know how much we are paying for, because it seems to me it could be important, if we needed



it?

MR GODFREY: To be quite honest, we haven't asked ourselves that question. We have ... the agenda of the Environment Forum is enormous and we are tending to address issues, look at the evidence that we can find, pull it all together and then draw our conclusions from that. If our conclusion is that further work needs to be done, we haven't actually addressed whether we are the ones who are going to be doing it or not.

DEPUTY HILL: No, but it is a good point you brought up actually, because, you know, this is part of what we are about really: finding out what is there and what isn't there, and it would appear there isn't anything there and also it would appear that there is no scheme or no one putting it forward to suggest we look into it. So possibly a full audit of what we have got is a requirement really.

MR GODFREY: I think it goes along also with a general lack of baseline information about the state of the environment in the Island. That was something else that was of concern to us and we highlighted in the position paper. On introducing any or considering any Agri-Environment Scheme, we said that it must be tested against three criteria.

DEPUTY HILL: Yes.

MR GODFREY: Clarity of objectives, detailed efficient methods of delivery and monitoring against baseline information to determine success. Well, there is very little baseline information. We feel that is a major weakness.

DEPUTY HILL: Could I just, whilst we are just talking about land, ask are you aware ... I do not know whether you were listening the other day when it was suggested that there may well be unnecessary fears about the land, that because of certain ways in which protocols etc, there may well be a need for the land to be used, to be set aside so to speak, without being, you know, keeping the land dormant for a year, rotational.

MR GODFREY: Yes. We did say that there are two things that the agricultural industry requires: a bank of suitable land and a resource of suitably skilled people. I'm quite confident that agriculture can use all the agricultural land, but it is in a process of adjustment from how it was used in the past. As you say, people have suggested that new protocols will insist that potatoes are grown not so intensively or that it is rotated between areas of land. Agriculture can use the land; it is a question of how much fertiliser they apply and how intensively they

farm.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Senator Le Maistre?

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: Going back to the conditionality issue, which was clearly one of the sticking points, do you feel that if the scheme was fully funded, compared to the 10% which was going to have an impact on an industry which is under stress, that that could resolve, or partly resolve, one of those issues; and that, if it was to be funded, then obviously landowners who have land which is not let tenanted, that it could be a useful bridge, as the industry changes, for that land to be retained in a form that could become used again later on, because I think there is this fear -- correct me if I am wrong -- that land could go out of agriculture and, therefore, the land for readjustment would then not be available when the industry is building up again?

MR GODFREY: The answer to the second part of your question is yes, although the Forum did suggest that if land were coming out of agriculture a change of use could be permitted, but it should be for uses that are "soft" in nature, as we described them. In other words, it implies that the land could be put back into agriculture should the need arise.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: Yes.

MR GODFREY: In answer to the first part of your question, the ongoing work that the Forum, and particularly the subgroup, are doing is to invite a number of farmers and landowners into the subgroup to test the components of the scheme against them. I think, by doing that, we will get a much clearer idea as to how effective it would be and what the take up would be. But I personally think that farmers generally are very sympathetic towards environmental issues. I don't believe there to be such a resistance there that makes conditionality necessary. I think most will come on board.

DEPUTY RONDEL: Can I move on then to other areas you mentioned? You mentioned a buffer zone and you also mentioned public access. Could you enlarge on those two, please?

MR GODFREY: If I tackle the public access one, public access obviously is very important. I think, again, personally I have got slight concerns that public access is something that people could get carried away with when there is no real pressure to do so. I don't think there is a problem with public access in the countryside at the moment. I think you will find most landowners and farmers are quite willing to have members of the public on their land, acting

responsibly. I think Jersey has an admirable network of footpaths in the Island. I think access into the interior, if you like, the interior farming land, is quite good, through the Green Lane Network etc. But there are areas where additional footpaths or bridleways could be made. They were highlighted in the Countryside Character Appraisal document that was done in 1999 as part of the review of the Island Plan. There are certain areas in the Island that the Countryside Character Appraisal particularly identified as having good potential to increase the public footpath network. So that is the footpath. I do not know, Hugh, if you would like to do anything about the buffer zones?

DEPUTY RONDEL:           Actually carry on dealing with the footpaths, since we are on that.

MR GODFREY:           Oh right, sorry.

DEPUTY RONDEL:           If I may come back in on that. Recently in fact I saw a young couple gleaning, which is something that hasn't actually happened since probably the end of the Occupation. There were all these potatoes having been left on the soil and in fact they were getting their seed for their own garden for next year. What is the view of the Environmental Forum?

MR GODFREY:           On people gleaning potatoes?

DEPUTY RONDEL:           Well all kinds of things.

MR GODFREY:           To be honest, that's not a particular subject we've discussed in detail, I don't think. We consider public access, I think, in a sort of global way really, particularly in relation to the Agri-Environment Scheme, where one of the components was establishing footpaths. There is this balance to be struck, I think, in any scheme between an element that is a farm management element, which has an ongoing element to the way a farmer farms, and an element which is more capital in nature, which is perhaps more the concern of the landowner. They may be one and the same people, but in Jersey often they are not. Establishing a footpath across a field doesn't really affect the way the farmer farms too much, it just perhaps moves his crop of baleria slightly further into the field. Maintaining a footpath is, of course, another matter.

MR FORSHAW:           If I can just say something here? I think the Environment Department are actually looking at schemes to join up the footpaths around the Island where there are gaps. I think you will find, if you were to ask them, that they have looked at this already and do have

some plans to do that where it is feasible and where public access is not seen as a problem.

DEPUTY RONDEL: Do you want to move on then to deal with buffer zones?

MR FORSHAW: Buffer zones. I think one of the ideas is that some of the sites, particularly the sites of special scientific interest around the Island, should be protected by buffer zones, particularly from nitrate pollution. If I could perhaps illustrate this by giving you an example. Jersey has the only agile frog population within the UK or Great Britain. There were two populations within the Island. Back in the 1960s there was a pollution incident at the La Mare which meant that one of those populations was completely wiped out, as was everything else in that water body. Although there is currently work going on to try and restore that population, it meant we were down to very few individuals and in fact they could become extinct within the Islands. Now, that is amphibians and that is an example, but we could use plants, we could use insects or whatever. It is quite important that some of these sites do have some additional protection because, although the sites might be protected if there is pollution from outside which then seeps into the land, we could have species that are quite vulnerable.

DEPUTY RONDEL: And how big an area do you actually see as the buffer zone, because, given that the nitrates and everything else and slurry actually gets beyond the actual area, what kind ----

MR FORSHAW: I think the buffer zones would be determined by the environment in that particular location. I do not think you can say it has got to be three metres, every buffer zone has got to be three metres wide. I think the width of that zone will be determined by what was being protected, what was going on in the nearby land and what the environment was -- you know, whether there endless hedges, whether it was open fields or whatever.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Deputy Hill?

DEPUTY HILL: Yes. Jersey is one of the few places that does not have an Agri-Environmental Scheme. How critical do you think it is to Jersey that we have one? It could be said that we haven't had one for ages and the agriculturalists and the farmers have been good custodians of the countryside. Is that pertinent that we have one or do you think we can continue in our own way, the Jersey way, without having one? How do you see the future without one?

MR GODFREY: We could continue without an Agri-Environment Scheme. I think the Island

would suffer because of it, mainly because of the low profitability in the agricultural industry. Should that change, should farming become suddenly more profitable again, that is another matter. It doesn't look particularly like it at the moment. So there are elements which, without additional funding, simply won't get done and, for that reason alone, we believe it is important that a scheme is introduced and funded.

DEPUTY HILL: It is interesting that you say about the industry isn't profitable, because I am going back to my childhood -- some of us can do -- and we think that the good husbandry that was done on the farm was done in the farmer's spare time, in between moving the cows or in between milking and the potatoes and all that. It wasn't necessarily because the farmers were earning lots of money. They did it because they felt that it was a duty and there was also a certain amount of pride and prestige as well. One didn't have a bad bank of trees. There was a certain amount of pride. So it was nothing to do with profitability. Do you see that there is a change in the culture maybe where people are looking at pounds, shillings and pence and would not see good husbandry as part and parcel of a good agriculturalist, but would add up the pounds, shillings and pence? You don't get your money for cutting ... well, you do, you get fined if you don't do your branchage, but, you know, I'm talking about the hedges in between the fields where there are no pressures. I can think now of where I'm living, that the fields inside ... the branchage has been done, but inside it is terrible really. There are all sorts of weeds and docks and that's because those fields are actually being let and the farmers who are using them, the growers who are using them, aren't doing any of the good husbandry at all.

MR GODFREY: I would be the last person to suggest that Jersey farmers have been carrying out practices that are bad for the environment. I think I'm very clear about this and I think it is very important that everybody is very clear, that a rural farmed environment is there because of farming, not despite farming. Now, the Island's environment, the Island's countryside, has changed a lot over the centuries. Indeed, I have photographs in my office of areas of the Island that I would challenge anybody to recognise because they have changed so much within the last 100 years; and I would suggest actually change for the better in the last 100 years. So I don't think it's a question of farmers have their practices of degrading the environment, but what is probably quite true is that, as farming has intensified and so the pressure on farming has intensified as well, so agricultural practices tend to be now harder than they use to be.

There is certainly a case to help farmers “soften” (for want of a better word) the farming practices.

Farming 100 years ago perhaps wasn't so intense of terms of fertiliser use ----

DEPUTY HILL: More leisurely.

MR GODFREY: Whereas today it is very much an industrial process. Because of that, I also don't believe ... I am sorry, I'm slightly not quite going off track, but I also don't believe there is such a thing as ... I don't see a difference between big farming and small farming. I think there is a difference in good farming and bad farming, but they are not necessarily linked to the scale of the farming operation.

DEPUTY HILL: No.

MR GODFREY: But what is true is that, with industrial farming and more intensive farming, there is a greater scope when things go wrong for them to go wrong in a big way. So farming has changed dramatically over the period and so has the countryside. When you say, yes, in the past a lot of work was done in the spare time and it was done by people who enjoyed doing it, that is possibly less true today. Farming is ... there is a lot more pressure on it. The stakes are a lot higher, I think. If a farmer is going to lose money today, it could be the difference between ongoing business and bankruptcy. Perhaps 100 years ago farming was a bit more diversified. It was a bit more robust. There were, if you like, elements of the farm that could see a farmer through a poor year until the next good one arrived.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Deputy Baudains?

DEPUTY BAUDAINS: Just if I could, first of all, pick up on one of your last comments about there is not a great deal of difference between big and small farming, but it is mainly to do with farming practices? Would you not agree that the larger farms tend to use possibly larger tractors and they are the ones more likely to be driving heavy trailers onto the ground? My own personal view is that they would be more likely to damage the soil structure than perhaps smaller farmers.

MR GODFREY: Yes, bigger machinery would do more damage to soil structure. I would question whether it is exclusive to the big farmers. I think farming has changed throughout the spectrum and often the smaller farmers who perhaps can't afford expensive equipment are often contracting the bigger farmers to do the work for them.

DEPUTY BAUDAINS: Yes, fair comment.

MR GODFREY: So I think it is more to do with the ----

DEPUTY BAUDAINS: Basically, what I wanted to focus on was land not actively being farmed, of which we have had various ... this is why other Members having been looking for solid information, because some people are telling us it could be 10,000 verges and other people are telling us, well, they don't really know of any. So we really need to know and I think we must agree that there is at least some. Firstly, do you believe there is a public awareness problem about that land, because certainly the feeling I get from the public is that all you have got to do is just close a farm gate and forget it, it returns to nature and why do you need to spend any money and why do we need an environment programme? I take it that the Forum is of the opinion that it does actually need to be managed? The second part of that is how would you address this issue, to get the value for money aspect across so that any environment scheme would actually have a higher political priority?

MR GODFREY: I think you are absolutely right. There isn't a public perception of the seriousness of the problem. Farm land ... you can't just shut the gate and walk away and come back a couple of years later and start up again as if nothing had happened. Land does need managing. Abandoned land has a look unique to itself and it's a look that most people I don't think wouldn't like. It's a look that is of questionable benefit to wildlife and the environment as a whole. Simply abandoning land isn't the answer. So management is important. How unused farm land can become managed instead of having the gates shut on it, I think, is a question of education and advice. Many of our farmers in the Island, I think, have grown up under a culture of intensive farming and would benefit from advice as to how to utilise land in a less intensive way. It also needs important co-operation with the landowners as well. Over recent years there have been extremely high rentals paid for land, and I think a number of landowners are very concerned about falling land rents. But there is no doubt that high land rents seriously restrict the activities farmers can do on them.

DEPUTY BAUDAINS: Is there not also a danger ... we have heard, again, conflicting advice. The idea that there will in future possibly be more rotation than in the current years forced on farmers by supermarkets, but is it not the case that supermarkets can at other times also require that they get their crop and "We don't care if they have to take it out of the field with a tractor or a pump". So there is a conflict here. What happens if this ... it seems to me

that what we are relying upon is rotation will take place because the supermarkets will require it, but, on the other hand, if we are just relying on that aspect, I see that as being dangerous.

MR GODFREY: Yes. There is a view that the day farming tied itself up with the supermarkets was the day farming got into bed with the devil. I think there is an element of truth within that. The supermarkets will say that their customers demand certain conditions in the produce that they buy and, therefore, that is why they are requiring it of the growers. I have yet to see any of the research surveys that supermarkets have done on their customers to ask them this question, but they assure us that that is the case. I think it is more important that environmental issues are addressed that are appropriate to the problems that exist in the Island and the Island should take a lead on that. Now, if that direction happens to be complimentary with the supermarkets, so much the better. If the supermarkets require the growers to undertake particular practices, then that obviously should take a part of any environmental scheme as well, because without the growers being able to grow and make a profit at their work, there is nobody to do the work at all. So it has got to be a two way process.

DEPUTY BAUDAINS: Yes. I mentioned that because it seemed almost to me at one time that some people were suggesting that the protocols required by the supermarkets could almost replace an agri-environment scheme -- "Well, this is required by them, so, you know, it replaces it."

MR GODFREY: I think it is ----

DEPUTY BAUDAINS: It could compliment it perhaps.

MR GODFREY: It could be very complimentary in certain areas, but completely inappropriate in others.

DEPUTY BAUDAINS: Yes.

MR GODFREY: I can't imagine Tesco's would have an element in their protocol to growers about dolmans in Jersey somehow.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: Or meadowland.

MR GODFREY: Or meadowland. I think the supermarkets do put in a base for what they require, but I think there is a tremendous opportunity for the Island to do better than that and, as a result, to have a countryside that is well maintained, have positive benefits for the environment in a number of areas and I think something that we would all be justly proud of.



It is very important, as we have pointed out and many people do point out, that Jersey's countryside and natural environment is a major factor in the quality of life for residents and a major draw for people who visit the Island.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Deputy Rondel?

DEPUTY RONDEL: Yes. You mentioned a little earlier on about the farmer being the right person and are not bad for the environment. Given that over recent years we have seen farmers leaving polythene in the hedgerows -- and I am getting on to the hedgerow area now -- and not moved from one year to another and it can be there for a number of years -- I can take you to areas in the Island where there is an abundance -- do you still stand by your comments?

MR GODFREY: In general, yes. I think there are always specific instances where there are exceptions to the rules, specific instances where farmers perhaps aren't doing quite what they really could do or should do, but, in general terms, I think yes.

DEPUTY RONDEL: Because that suggests one by-product of one particular crop, but where we see machinery (and in some areas there is quite a bit of machinery left on hedgerows and headlands and the like), plus potato boxes which are now defunct by their thousands -- I can take you to a place at Crabbé for 12 months, if not longer and so forth -- you still maintain that the farmers are the best people to look after the countryside?

MR GODFREY: In general terms, yes. I think that obviously there are specific instances where things have taken place that should never have been allowed and they should be cleared up, but, again, I would come back to the difference between good farming and bad farming. Bad farming is not something to be encouraged and good farming is.

DEPUTY RONDEL: But given that, in many cases, subsidies or public money has been spent and given to farmers to run a good operation, many farmers have now gone out of business and have left the Island with these scars, how would your Environmental Forum go about cleaning up these areas in the interests of the public?

MR GODFREY: That is a very good question. They should be cleared up. The logical answer is that the person who put them in the first place should be asked to remove them. It is not a particular issue that the Forum has discussed as a specific item, but common sense would suggest that it shouldn't be allowed to continue. But I don't think it is widespread. I think David might like to come in.

MR ELLAM: I think there is a fair element that really is the concern of Planning and Environment, in that nobody has looked at this ever increasing problem of agricultural machinery being left in a field and, instead of being just left there until next week or next month, it is being left there until next year, and then slowly but surely many areas -- and I know some of the ones you are talking about -- have become agricultural machinery "dumps", for want of a better word. I think we have got enough things within the planning laws that that could be stopped. So I don't think it is an Environment Forum issue; I think it is something that maybe some of the planning people need to have a look at and maybe it might also fall back to some of the parishes to look at as well.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Senator Le Maistre?

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: Just following on from that, would you agree that probably this reflects the low profitability of recent years and the point mentioned that some farmers have gone out of business and are actually no longer there with the funding to clear some of this polythene or whatever? I mean, that could be one of the results.

MR GODFREY: I think it is quite likely that that is a factor within it.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: Yes. Could we move to the question of pollution and the rôle of the Agri-Environment Scheme in the protection of the environment from the pollution point of view? What do you think are the opportunities for an agri-environment scheme in pollution issues, be they nitrates or slurry stores; and if we don't have a scheme, do you think that the consequences could be -- I choose my words carefully perhaps -- but of concern that may be severe in certain cases, but of concern?

MR GODFREY: Yes. There are, I suppose, three issues you touched on there. There is pollution in terms of fertiliser run-off, nitrate run-off, which we believe is of some concern to the Waterworks Company, although perhaps not as much concern to them as the public might think it is.

There is also the issue of pesticides and chemicals. I believe that that is an area that has greatly improved in recent years. The Waterworks Company have informed us that the regular testing they do on inflow streams has shown a dramatic improvement, I think really in response ... and their view was that it was in response to the work of the old Department of Agriculture and the courses they used to run for farmers on pesticides.

Slurry is the third issue you have mentioned, and that is one which is probably the most pressing of all of them, in that there are, I understand, a number of dairy farm units that do need to invest in slurry storage. It is an expensive thing to invest in and it is a non-profit generating thing to invest in. There is an opportunity within the Agri-Environment Scheme to assist them in that and turn what is currently looked on as a waste by-product into a valuable fertiliser. I think there is an enormous opportunity there to assist the industry in making use of the assets in the best possible way and reducing the input of artificial fertiliser.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Deputy Rondel?

DEPUTY RONDEL: Can I come in on the back of that slurry question?

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Yes.

DEPUTY RONDEL: What is your Environmental Forum's view on the injection of slurry from public services, i.e., from Bellozanne, in relation or compared to the use of slurry from cattle etc? There is quite a big difference, so what is the view of the Environmental Forum on that?

MR ELLAM: This is more of a personal view than the Environmental Forum, but I think, having spent sort of 30 years in agricultural waste treatment and what-have-you, 20 years ago I would have said injecting sewerage sludge into land or putting it on to land or whatever was an acceptable technique and I think where we are now I don't think it is an acceptable technique any more. Digestive sludges would be about the only thing I would put on anything today. But I think, in the long term, it is not the right thing to put on agricultural land, but that is my personal view.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: Is that from a ... sorry, but could you explain actually what you mean and what the impact is? Why do you take that view?

MR ELLAM: I take that view because what happens in the sewerage business is that we pollute sewerage with heavy metals and all sorts of other contaminant chemicals, drugs. All this lot goes into the sewerage system and tends to be concentrated in the sludges by the nature of the process. So by the time we have gone through all these processes, in theory you have killed all the bugs and bits and pieces, but the heavy metals are still there. You will have probably read in the paper quite recently about the fish changing sex, and this is all the business to do with the pill and things.

DEPUTY RONDEL: The hormones?

MR ELLAM: Yes. So everything ends up in the sludges and we put that back on the land and that is not where it wants to be. I mean, I think incineration for that bit is probably the right thing to do.

DEPUTY BAUDAINS: Sorry, but to come in on that, is it not the case ... I mean, I saw it for many years because on my parents' farm we used to at one time put that. I was often quite dubious about the value of the material. I don't think it actually has a lot. As compared with animal waste, it doesn't have much benefit to us all, but I was concerned when I read the specification of the material, as you highlighted there, the heavy metals and that, and I thought surely this was going to build up a contamination of the land over the years.

MR ELLAM: That is right. About 20 years ago now, I was a technical backup to a sales specialist for people selling agricultural equipment to do exactly what we are talking about, inject or spread slurries, and obviously all they are interested in commercially is spreading sewerage sludges and the likes of. But if you looked at it from the nutritional, we had agriculturalist farmers with a slurry problem taking sewerage sludge on many farms. I have seen it in England and, I mean, it is wrong. We have got to utilise the fertiliser value of agricultural waste much better than we do, and the potential is there if we do that.

DEPUTY RONDEL: If I could come in, Mr Chairman. In the protocols from supermarkets, is there anything preventing farmers using slurry on the land -- I am sorry, using sewerage waste on the land?

MR GODFREY: I am not aware of any.

MR ELLAM: I could not answer that. I mean, I'm not sure. At one stage there used to be guidelines in various sort of codes for -- on the UK mainland that is -- for certain crops, in that you couldn't grow crops for human consumption on the year that you spread sludge on the land, but I am a bit out of date now as to where we are.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Has Dr Dwyer any questions that she would like to put perhaps on our behalf?

DR DWYER: I will try to keep it brief because we have already had a very good discussion, which has been very interesting. One point: in relation to the issue of land, potentially more land, becoming neglected if there isn't an agri-environmental scheme, your emphasis as it

appeared to me was very strongly on the visual result of that neglect. You did briefly mention other things might also be affected. I wondered if you, with the expertise that you have got in the Forum, whether you are able to comment on, for example, whether any biodiversity action plan species or habitats might be expected to be negatively affected by this process of neglect or whether there might be implications for historical or archaeological features on the Island.

MR GODFREY: I think the best way to summarise that is, in our discussions, we felt that actually there would be opportunities to increase biodiversity through an agri-environment scheme within areas of land that were no longer in production. The Agri-Environmental Scheme itself should be of benefit to biodiversity in a farm or land that is being farmed. So it would actually attack it on the two levels.

DR DWYER: Yes. I just meant that if one of the consequences of not having a scheme is that more land becomes neglected, what does the process of neglect do to those particular aspects?:

MR GODFREY: We haven't looked at that in any great detail, but, in my experience, there are some species that will do very well off neglected land, but the majority do very well probably to the exclusion of a broader biodiversity in general.

DR DWYER: So really you don't have the information on the sorts of habitats that were being affected and, therefore, the consequences?

MR GODFREY: We have got very little information on the land that is supposedly coming out of agriculture and being neglected. It is really all anecdotal. We can all go and point to various fields in the Island that we believe aren't being farmed any longer, but, in general terms, there is a paucity of information on it.

DR DWYER: And would you accept that it is quite critical to know what sort of land is being affected?

MR GODFREY: Absolutely.

DR DWYER: To know what the consequences will for the environment?

MR GODFREY: Absolutely.

DR DWYER: Thank you. That is helpful. On the issue of pollution, I want to just slightly play devil's advocate with you. You talked about the way in which an agri-environment scheme could incentivise people to invest in slurry stores and, therefore, to see slurry as an

asset rather than a problem. Now, I sympathise entirely with that approach; I know, practically speaking, that can be effective. Other people -- in fact somebody who has submitted evidence to this inquiry -- have said that a tax on artificial fertilisers would achieve the same. What would you say to that?

MR GODFREY: Well, it possibly could do, but I think we have got to bear in mind the end result we want to achieve. If the end result we want to achieve is simply to stop fertilising as quickly as possible, then you could suggest a tax. But I would suggest that the end result we want to achieve is a vibrant farming industry that's farming sympathetically alongside the aims of environmental schemes. I think the way to do that is through encouragement and education as opposed to taxation.

DR DWYER: So it goes back to your argument about profitability at the end of the day?

MR GODFREY: Yes.

DR DWYER: A tax would be a negative impact on profitability.

MR GODFREY: Yes.

MR FORSHAW: Could I say something?

DR DWYER: Yes.

MR FORSHAW: I think the other thing is that there are going to be slurries. As long as there are dairy cattle in the Island there is going to be slurry and it will have to be managed one way or another and, at the moment, with inadequate slurry stores, farmers are being forced to spread slurry at times that are inappropriate, times of heavy rain or whatever. That is often when the pollution is taking place. So if they have a greater storage capacity, they can inject it or inject it into the soil and you get a much better result.

DR DWYER: Yes, I note that. Thank you. **(Pause)** There was one other. **(Pause)** No, I had better leave it, it's gone out of my head.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: Do you want me to come in with a question while you think about it?

DR DWYER: Yes. Thank you, Jean.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: Has the Countryside Forum looked at the question of the spread of particular weeds such as docks and ragwort and so on and what appears to be -- it may not show this here, but it seems to me to be -- a fairly rapid spread in the last five years, I would

say? Is that a source of concern? Do you feel that it does not matter or that it ought to be source of concern?

MR GODFREY: The Forum itself hasn't looked at that question. I don't know if you would like to ...

MR FORSHAW: I think at the moment we don't have enough information. It comes back to knowing where the land is and how much there is. If we could get that information, we could then move on to look at the impacts that that is causing, but, at the moment, it is a difficult question to address because a lot of the information is anecdotal and we can't point to where all this land is and how many verges of land is involved and where they are. Until we can do that ... I mean, I agree you get the impression that there is an increase in docks and ragwort around the Island, but we don't have any information.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: Can I pick you up on that because it seems to me that Jersey is not a big place and I would have thought that you as a vet would tend to go around the Island quite a bit. Visually, it is actually not difficult and if you go down to the Jersey Pearl/Jersey Gold -- I can never remember what it is called -- at the end of the Five Mile Road nowadays, you will find a huge crop of ragwort now which three years ago was only just a few clumps.

MR FORSHAW: Yes. I can actually believe that, but you are asking ----

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: At Corbiere you will find equally large tracts, and I have the photographs here to prove it. It seems to me -- I just ask the question -- do you think enough is being done to look at the issue and to devise appropriate action, if that is required? I mean, I have got personal views, but it is not for me to express them here.

MR GODFREY: Certainly the visual evidence would suggest that there is a large increase in docks and ragwort. It would coincide also that you would naturally expect to find fields which have got a large population of docks and ragworts are the fields that are actually being unfarmed.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: Neglected.

MR GODFREY: The two would tend to go side by side.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: Hmm hmm.

MR ELLAM: It would appear to be the first indicator of the fact that the land hasn't been farmed. The first indicator seems to be much more ragwort, docks -- I mean, the ragwort is

more visible obviously because of, you know, the thing.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: Yes.

MR ELLAM: I don't know now, but it used to be a notifiable weed, in which case the landowner ought to be responsible for it still.

MR GODFREY: It still is.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: Yes. But is there recognition? It seems to me a bit strange that the statistics in the UK suggest that 2,000 horses a year die from ingestion of ragwort. I don't know what the incidence in cattle is. But it seems to me, with a very tight island land mass, this ought to be of concern because it spreads so quickly and so easily. That is why I asked the question.

MR GODFREY: I think it is a perfect illustration of why you can't simply shut the gate and walk away. Land does need to be managed in continuum, even if it is being managed to revert back to nature.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: Yes.

MR GODFREY: Which can be done. But there are fields on the north coast that I understand The National Trust are trialing to encourage a reversion back to a heather heath type of environment, which can be done, but they are having to invest quite a lot in managing that change. It is not simply a question of leave it alone, it will turn back to heather. I understand, where they have left it alone, it turns to bracken.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Right. Did Dr Dwyer remember her question?

DR DWYER: Yes. The thing that I had forgotten that I wanted to mention was in relation to diffuse pollution you talked about nitrate, but you didn't mention phosphate. I wondered if you had looked at that at all and knew anything about the issues.

MR GODFREY: Again, we haven't in any great detail. The presentation that we received from the Waterworks Company didn't seem to highlight that as being one of their major concerns.

DR DWYER: Certainly in the UK I think there is a growing realisation that in fact phosphate is going to be a more difficult issue to solve in relation to agriculture than nitrate.

MR FORSHAW: I can perhaps come in here. I have some small experience of that, in that down at L'Ouaisné when we were monitoring the agile frog site, there is phosphate leeching



in from the estate which is just at the back of that and where the drainage appears, some of it appears, to come directly into the ponds at L'Ouaisné without going into any sewerage system at all, and we were picking up phosphates -- that is one of the things we were looking for -- in that drainage, so I am sure you are right.

DR DWYER: And the final issue is really this issue about whether farming needs to be ... if what you need is a profitable farming industry for a good quality environment, why don't we just forget this scheme and just give farmers lots of money? Surely, we are trying to do something more than just make the industry profitable.

MR GODFREY: I agree. I think we would all share that. One of the things we were particularly concerned about was that the scheme had to have clear objectives. If the taxpayer is paying farmers for something, it is quite right that the taxpayer should be quite clear what it is buying, and that's where I think an agri-environment scheme has enormous benefit. It is that the public can see that the money they are putting in is achieving a result. But, alongside the money, it is most important that the monitoring and the baseline information is in place as well. I have a review from the *Journal of Applied Science* entitled "*How Effective are European Agri-Environmental Schemes in Conserving and Promoting Biodiversity?*". It is fascinating to see -- and this was a study done across Europe and, I believe, it was looking at some 62 evaluation studies originating from five European Union countries -- that the theme that ran through them was that there was weak monitoring and mixed effectiveness. So I think, from the Forum's point of view, we were very strong that there must be good baseline data to start with, so we know what we are dealing with; we must, therefore, have very clear objectives as to what we wish to purchase; and then monitor it so that we can see that we are getting the desired results.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Senator Le Maistre?

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: Well, those are very nice words and most of us would buy into that, I think, quite happily. However, would you agree or disagree that monitoring objectives is actually not a precise science and, whilst one can monitor trends, it is perhaps more difficult to actually measure the progress that has been made in environmental changes? There are indicators which clearly will demonstrate where you started off from and where you have moved to, but to set absolutely clear targets, if one can call them that, in environmental terms

is not as easy as the guy behind a desk would suggest it is.

MR GODFREY: Absolutely, but that in itself is not a reason not to do it. It would be rather like saying “Tomorrow I want to feel happier than I do today” and you can wake up tomorrow morning saying “Yes, I feel happier”, but you couldn’t possibly say how much happier you are feeling. Monitoring -- it is not a simple question of saying “We started with two, we have added two, therefore we have now got four.” It is not as simple as that, no, but I think there is actually an enormous amount of information within the Island about the state of the environment. Probably where we as a community have been lacking is putting the information together so that it does form a baseline picture. Then, having done that, the countryside character or basis that we have touched on, highlighted a number of areas within the countryside that could benefit from or would benefit from investment and enhancement. Having set out what our baseline is, it is then a relatively easy process to focus on the areas we wish to improve and continue monitoring them. I think trends, as you say, can then be examined.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: Right. Have you any closing statements you would like to make?

MR GODFREY: No, except, I think, in summary, to say that the Forum was very supportive of a countryside renewal scheme or an agri-environment scheme, or whatever the name might finally end up to be and we would hope to see it implemented as soon as possible.

DEPUTY DUHAMEL: All right. On behalf of the Panel, I would like to thank you for your submissions and your opinions expressed today and thank you for coming.

SENATOR LE MAISTRE: We hope it wasn’t too painful.

MR GODFREY: It was a pleasure.

DEPUTY BAUDAINS: Thank you for coming.

**Mr Godfrey, Mr Forshaw and Mr Ellam withdrew**