

4.15 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services regarding the replacement of the current sewage treatment equipment by the end of 2013:

Will the Minister confirm that there is a need to replace the current sewage treatment equipment by the end of 2013, and, if so, will he advise what is the current estimated cost of the replacement system, what is its life expectancy and how will treated sewage be released into the environment?

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

I am glad we are debating this before lunch. I would not want to put Members off. The sewage treatment facilities at Bellozanne were originally commissioned in 1959 to serve a population of 57,000 people. Over the years as the population has increased the plant has been extended to cope with the extra demand placed on the system. Some items of the plant, such as the concrete tanks, have a greater life span meaning that the various parts of the plant have been replaced at different intervals as they came to the end of their useful life. Over the long-term the whole plant will have to be replaced in one form or another. The work on the liquid waste strategy is dealing with this issue. The immediate problem, which I think the question relates to, is the replacement of the sludge treatment facilities. These are currently coming to the end of their life and will need to be replaced by the end of 2013. The project will include the installation of 3 x 1,600 cubic metre sludge digesters and associated thickening and de-watering equipment. In order to achieve the best value for money for the States this project will be tendered in 3 phases with an estimated cost of just over £10 million. The life span of the replacement equipment will be a minimum of 15 years for mechanical and electrical works and 60 years for the digestion tanks. The end product of the new sludge treatment system is enhanced treated biosolids, which will then be used as a fertiliser. The modernisation of the sludge treatment facilities will also have the added benefit of reducing odours in the Bellozanne Valley area.

4.15.1 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

Interesting answer; well maybe not, but an answer anyway. Could I ask 2 questions, please, out of that answer? It was kind of the Minister to indicate that 2013 related specifically to the sludge treatment facility, which is £10 million. He did however address the question in its entirety by saying that in time the entire system will need overhauling. It was designed initially for 57,000. What is the estimated cost and when is that cost needed to be acquired in relation to that answer ... what is the cost and when is it needed to be acquired? Finally, from the work on the compost report we did with the Minister for Planning and Environment, it was determined by Jersey Royal that sewage sludge applied to their land would negate the possibility of them selling their potatoes into the U.K. market. Where does the Minister propose to dispose of the sewage sludge fertiliser?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

While I cannot answer the Deputy's questions directly, I can say that the liquid waste strategy is currently being developed which will identify the assets that will require replacement over the next 20 years. In terms of the sewage sludge on land the department is responsible for that distribution and monitors the areas on which it is

put so that the land is not overdosed in any area and is subject to the regulator's requirements and to avoid prejudice from markets trading groups.

4.15.2 Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier:

Could the Minister say what relief, if any, his answer offers to the residents of Bellozanne Valley, in particular, and parts of St. Helier where lives are blighted by the presence of the sewage treatment plant and whether he and his team have considered possibly putting future facilities in other parts of the Island such as St. Brelade?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

While I think probably in an ideal world one might put the sewage treatment down at La Collette within the existing industrial area it would cost an enormous amount of money to do so, and I would suggest in the present economic climate it is probably not feasible to do that. But I think it is incumbent on my department to reduce the odours in Bellozanne, and we have made significant strides in achieving that and hope by the undertaking of the present work, which I have alluded to, that that will improve considerably in the next few years.

4.15.3 The Deputy of St. John:

Given we were given a lot of paperwork by the Scrutiny Panel probably a year ago now on the liquid waste strategy, we have had very little information from the department on what is going on to date and given that the figures are somewhere in the region of £200 million to £250 million I would say on what will be required, how is this going to impact on the Minister's latest pet subject, which is close to all our hearts, and that is the condition of our main roads, et cetera, given that so much will be required in the liquid waste area, how is he going to get the funding for both these areas over the same period of time, because both require tens of millions of pounds?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Well it is a challenge, from the point of view not only of my department but from the States, to find the funding to underwrite these necessary requirements. The Deputy is quite right that the liquid waste strategy will cost the figures which he suggests, but the policy is under development. My department have just got some funding to start working on it, and we hope to come up with some firmer proposals as time goes on. Clearly, in his present position he will be party to those discussions. It is a balancing act in terms of budgeting, not only within my department but other areas of the States, and I suggest that when it comes to annual budgets and strategic plans the Deputy's input will be appreciated so that we can allocate appropriately.

4.15.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will the Minister assure residents of Bellozanne that he will keep additional traffic down to a minimum as he starts this extra construction work?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I have to say that the residents of Bellozanne are better off subsequent to the opening of the new E.f.W. (Energy from Waste) plant at La Collette and that the refuse traffic, as we would call it, has now disappeared. To be fair there will be some initial heavy traffic while early works are going on but, as always, we will attempt to minimise the disruption to the public and look forward to feedback from the Bellozanne residents,

and will keep them in touch through our newsletter, the *Bellozanne News* and keep them informed of what is going on.

4.15.5 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Has the Minister consulted with the Environment Department as to environmental alternatives to what is obviously an old technology?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Yes, my officers are well-briefed on the latest technology but curiously, in terms of sewage works, old technology works best. It is a chemical action and we have not come across any viable alternatives, or viable or proven alternatives. I have to say that some years ago a new process was tried. It was not terribly successful and we look forward to proposing that particular unit with, probably, an old-fashioned one.

4.15.6 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

Indeed, on Scrutiny we were told that the estimated costs for upgrading the traditional sewage works were going to be in the region of £200 million to £250 million in the next 20 years. We are now embarking upon replacing and improving upon the old technology, and I would like to ask the Minister if it is really not now time to think about bio-gas solutions where we could use the by-product to fuel the buses, as they are part of Connex's fleet. Connex has a fleet in many jurisdictions which run on bio-gas.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

The department takes the gas off the top of some of the tanks and it is used in gas engines to provide energy on site, so I would suggest that we are taking up the Deputy's suggestion. Not sure about putting it in the buses yet, and we would not like to reduce bus usership by perhaps using the wrong fuel.