

3.3 Deputy J.H. Young of St. Brelade of the Minister for Planning and Environment regarding the future of the planning system:

Do the Planning Officers Society's recommendations for the future of the planning system reflect the opinion of the Minister, and if implemented will they mean that future Ministers will be required to balance and trade-off environmental protection of Jersey's coasts, heritage and countryside against conflicting economic and financial interests undermining Planning Law in the Island Plan, and if so what does he intend to do?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel of St. Saviour (The Minister for Planning and Environment):

Broadly, yes, I am generally content with the recommendations of the Planning Officers Society's report. All planning decisions are a balance of competing interests, and the 2011 Island Plan contains policies which when taken at face value could conflict with one another. In my opinion it is role of the decision maker in each case to take into the account the particular circumstances of the application and to apply a reasonable judgment. The report of the Planning Officers Society explores where the issues of countryside and heritage protection are properly balanced with those of economic interests.

3.3.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

The Minister holds himself up as the environmental champion. Is he not in his answer there facing both ways at once?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

Some Members of this House or indeed the members of the public might hold that opinion but it goes with the job and with the territory. I am capable of having 2 heads and speaking to myself on occasion.

3.3.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I must confess to being a member of the Planning Panel but I would still ask this question, one that the Minister knows is close to my heart. Does the Minister not believe that the report on which the Deputy bases his question, the POS Enterprises' report on the role of the Minister called for the Minister to play an increasingly minimal job in planning and to leave decisions to Planning so that it would not be seen, although exercised with the best of intentions, that one person was exercising excessive power and influence?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

From the number of applications that I have involved myself in for valid reasons, it is a very small number and long term I do agree with the Deputy that it is the intention to move the direction of the Minister's job in the direction that he has indicated.

3.3.3 Deputy J.H. Young:

Will the Minister accept the report also says that Jersey residents are passionate about the importance of the coast and countryside and the natural environment, and the need for their protection? Is not his answer effectively saying: "Well, there is not a case for hearts and minds anymore. Planning is about processes. Tick the box", in some kind of abstract process of balancing conflict?

Deputy R.G. Duhamel:

The Deputy mentions the balance word and that is absolutely right, and within the report it concludes that the balance of decision-making must be across heritage, environment and economic development. That is the correct one when compared to the Island strategic aims and that the balance of decision-making is broadly appropriate. It is not a case, although

many arguments are put forward that the type of decision-making that the Minister should involve himself in and his panel and his officers, is to be one-sided. Quite clearly for anyone who has held a post within the Planning Department the truth of the matter is somewhere very much in between. It is a question of balance and sometimes that balance line will not be in the middle.