

3.7 The Connétable of St. Helier of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding ‘cover and treat’ odour mitigation technology to be used in the proposed sewage treatment works in Bellozanne Valley: [1(266)]

Will the Minister advise what cover and treat odour mitigation technology is planned to be used in the proposed sewage treatment works in Bellozanne Valley and whether this is recognised in the industry as the most effective option available? If it is not, will he agree to pursue instead the most effective and, if not, will he explain why not?

Deputy E.J. Noel (The Minister for Infrastructure):

The planning application includes an environmental impact statement that summarises the results of a comprehensive environmental impact assessment that has been carried out by the department’s environmental consultants, Cascade, supported by the department’s technical consultants Sweco. The environmental impact statement, prepared by Cascade, runs to some 303 pages for the main report, but also includes 1,040 pages of appendices, as well as a non-technical summary. The application also includes a design statement, a sustainability statement and a waste management plan, as well as some 23 associated drawings and documents. The odour assessment for the new works is set out in chapter 13 of the environmental impact statement and is based on the technical proposals to cover and odour control the most odious parts of the new plant. The treatment processes being covered and odour controlled at Bellozanne are: the inlet works where the incoming sewage is discharged; the associated skips where screening and grit from the incoming flow are deposited; the distribution chamber for the primary settlement tanks, which is the most odour-generating part of the primary treatment process; and the digested sludge storage tanks. In addition, there will be odour mitigation measures for the new tanker discharge facility to be located on the site of the old, now demolished, digesters on the west side of the Bellozanne Valley. This approach is in accordance with the U.K. best practice where the order of priority for mitigating odour is to address all operational dealings with sludge, which has already been achieved at Bellozanne, followed by covering and odour control in the inlet works, which is being achieved through the completion of the new works.

The Bailiff:

Minister, the 90-second rule is well passed.

Deputy E.J. Noel:

Sir, it is a complicated subject and I want to be able to give the information required. I have just 2 more sentences to say. The next steps will be to cover the whole of the primary settlement process and, as such, my department will ensure that these can be retrofitted, if required. However, it is only approximately 5 per cent of primary settlement tanks in the U.K. are currently covered and a high proportion of these is where there is industrial effluent received at the works, leading to very strong odours. This is not the case in Bellozanne.

3.7.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Why did the Minister tell residents, whom he met recently, concerned about the impact on their homes and businesses ... and I stress that they are not opposed to the provision of new sewage treatment works, they are opposed to odour nuisance. Why did he tell them there would be no cover and treat techniques used in the construction of the new works?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

What was said to those residents is that we have not got it in our initial plans, but if it is required - and the engineers tell me that it will not be required - we will build that in.

3.7.2 Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Did the Minister also tell those said residents that there would be no decrease in odours, because the size of the plant would be bigger, but proportionately there would be a discreet decrease in the amount of odours? I would also like to draw the Minister's attention to a headline here in 2009: "£1 million sum to clear the air at Bellozanne." Was that money used to do something to the old plant, or has it been put towards the new one?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I am not sure what happened in 2009. I believe that we did take some mitigation works on that, but I will come back to the Deputy to confirm. With regard to the first part of his question ... which I have now forgotten, sorry.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

You suggested to the concerned residents that there would be no decrease in the amount of odour, but as the plant will be significantly bigger, proportionately there is a decrease and the odour emissions in terms of the map that you indicated earlier will have moved east, therefore affecting less residents, but residents that are, perhaps, more sensitive being affected now, because there is a school and a hotel.

Deputy E.J. Noel:

Despite the fact that the new plant is designed for a larger population, some 120,000 plus expansion, there will be at least an 18 per cent reduction on the current levels.

3.7.3 Deputy J.A. Hilton of St. Helier:

The Minister has given States Members a lot of information in the past few minutes. Can he just confirm, did I hear correctly that he said that if there was a problem in the future that the money, the resources, would be made available to cover all the tanks involved to mitigate the odour problem for those residents of West Hill?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

Ministers act on advice and the advice I had is that the covering of the primary settlement tanks should not be required, but if they are, we are ensuring at the facility that we do build that those covers could be retrofitted. We are doing some additional work, as I indicated in my previous answer to Deputy Lewis at the beginning of this session.

3.7.4 Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Surely, the Minister should agree that everything possible should be done during this phase of development. For a 30-year plant that is going to last 30 years, everything possible should be done to mitigate the smell, a smell that residents have put up with for a very, very long time. Does he not agree that, for the sake of a few more million pounds, but over a 30-year period that is a well worthwhile investment, if it mitigates the problem once and for all, rather than waiting just to see if it is going to work or not? Should he not be implementing that as part of his plan now, as was agreed in a petition in 2006 and money allocated in 2009 in the then business plan to mitigate the smell? Does he not agree this is the opportunity, perhaps a once in a lifetime opportunity, to mitigate the smell once and for all?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

As I said, Ministers act upon advice and I have put the potential additional spend to cover the primary settlement tanks in the same category as we put the denitrification plant at Bellozanne. We do not want to spend some £40 million on a denitrification plant if it is not necessary. Similarly, I do not want to spend some £4 million on covering the primary settlement tanks if

it is not going to be necessary. If it is deemed necessary then we will cover them, but I am not going to sanction spending taxpayers' money when it may not be required.

3.7.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is the Minister, as a relative newcomer to this House, not aware that it was deemed necessary some 10 years ago and the Deputy for St. Helier No. 3 and 4 District was committed to covering this facility and promised, at the time, that this would be done? What has changed since?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

What has changed since is that we have covered other areas that produce more odour. We have mitigated on where we are. But I repeat: our aim is, and always has been, to transform the area of Bellozanne and the waste water treatment plant there to minimise any possible nuisances and attenuate the smells is a key component of one of our drivers.

[10:30]

That is why we have also moved, from that site, the Energy from Waste plant. It is why we are moving the clinical waste incinerator. It is why we are moving the scrapyards. It is why we are moving the green waste facility. It is why we have moved the household recycling centre. We are trying to be better neighbours than we have been in the past.

3.7.6 The Constable of St. Helier:

I am sure residents and businesses concerned about this development will be heartened by the Minister's assurance, and I quote: "If it is required it will be included." But he did say retrofitting and further work. My question to the Minister is: the first sewage treatment works, certainly that I am aware of, was of such high quality that people came to Jersey to see how we did it. People, Surfers against Sewage, surfed in the outfall. The fact that only 5 per cent of U.K. sewage treatment works are fully covered should not, surely, be a reason why Jersey does not want to be in that top 5 per cent.

Deputy E.J. Noel:

It is not the reason. Of course, the majority of those have a different type of effluent going into them. It is clear **[Interruption]** ... they have industrial effluent, which is slightly different to household effluent. It is clear that we have not adequately defined the unit of measurement for odour in our report, nor explained the report in plain English. On seeing the results of the survey, prior to lodging, we did add more odour control to the primary tank distribution area to mitigate issues. This additional safeguard has not been modelled. Over the weekend I have agreed with my officers that we should re-run the model with up-to-date information. If this does not further improve the odour issues for all then we would add more odour abatements. As I have already said, our aim has been and always will be to transform the area of Bellozanne for the better for all. We are not in the position of making life worse for our neighbours. Our strategy has been to move all of the solid waste activities away from that area and to try and enhance that particular part of St. Helier, of which I have fond memories, because I grew up alongside it in the first 10 or so years of my life. So, I know first-hand what odour issues there are at Bellozanne.