

3.4 Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the relationship between the Department's agent and Grontmij and Sweco and the planning applications for the new sewage treatment works in Bellozanne Valley: [1(202)]

In relation to the new sewage treatment works in Bellozanne Valley, will the Minister explain what the relationship is, if any, between the department's agent, Cascade, and Grontmij and Sweco - sorry, if I have not pronounced those names correctly - and will he also explain why a full-site layout of the proposed works was not part of the initial planning application?

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

There are 2 unrelated questions here: I may take over the 90 seconds to answer them both fully. Cascade Consulting are the environmental consultants appointed by my department to advise on environmental issues on the new sewage treatments works - the S.T.W. - project at Bellozanne, and to co-ordinate and prepare the environmental impact assessment for the scheme. It should be noted that in 2015 Cascade Consulting were acquired by the engineering and environmental consultancy group, Ricardo Group. Grontmij - I share the Constable's struggle to pronounce that word - are the technical consultants appointed by the department to provide technical support on the S.T.W. project and are currently charged with the civil design of the new plant. Grontmij were taken over by Sweco Limited in 2016 so Grontmij and Sweco are now one and the same company. Sweco have an extensive background in the water industry, particularly in the design of sewage treatment works. There is no relationship between Cascade and Sweco. With the second question, with regards to the planning application, when the initial planning application was submitted on 6th February 2017 planning officers required further detailed drawings of the new plant before they could advertise the application. These additional drawings were prepared and subsequently submitted but when the application was first advertised by the Planning Department on 21st March 2017 the additional drawings were the only drawings uploaded to the website by Planning. This oversight was in fact spotted by my officers and Planning were notified and the site layout plans were uploaded on 5th May. All drawings have since been available to view and for comment on the Planning website. However, I have asked my officers to request an extension to the Planning consultation period to allow the public to fully review these additional layout plans.

3.4.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

I am grateful to the Minister for rectifying what appears to have been a mistake in the uploading of the plans. In respect of the first part of the question, which is about the relationship of the department's advisers to the procurement of the plan, is it not the case that in 2009 this consultant - let us call them "Sweco" although then they were called the more unpronounceable name - that this consultant advocated a perimeter in terms of odour nuisance of level 5, now as the consultant acting for the procurement and they are now accepting lesser odour nuisance.

[10:15]

My concern clearly is if the department employ a consultant to advise you about environmental risk and they end up working for you, is it not a case of poacher turned gamekeeper?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I am not aware of the details that the Constable is suggesting there. As far as I am aware the definition of the different levels, you have the 1.5 level, 3 level, the 5 level, and a 10 level, have not altered at all in that period but I will investigate and get back to the Constable.

3.4.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier:

The Constable and Members may like to look at question 15 of the written answers. It does show a table showing the different odour levels. Can the Minister tell me though why his advisers, if they are trying to minimise the odour, the scheme does not include the covering and odour controlling of primary settlement tanks, which would cost an extra £4.1 million and is not included in the £75 million estimate? If you are trying to keep the odour down why have you not covered those tanks?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

It is a shame that the Deputy... I know he could not attend the last States sitting for an urgent matter, but that was answered then. The advice that we were given is that at the moment we will not need to cover the tanks to keep the odour down to acceptable levels. If it turns out that we do have to cover those tanks in the future we will make sure that the current design is capable of being adapted. But I am not in the game of spending taxpayers' money unless it is absolutely essential to do so. Two weeks ago I mentioned that in the similar way we are not building a denitrification plant at the cost of some £40 million at the S.T.W. because at the moment we do not know that it would be necessary and it would be unwise to spend taxpayers' money on something that is potentially unnecessary.