

2018.07.10

3.3 Connétable J.E. Le Maistre of Grouville of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the funding of road safety projects: [OQ. 85/2018]

Will the Minister either seek extra funding, or prioritise funding from his existing budget, in order to bring forward any proposed road safety projects that have been identified by the Road Safety Review Panel but which have not yet been actioned; and if not, why not?

Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour (The Minister for Infrastructure):

Road safety has always been a priority for a highway authority. This is done through providing well-maintained roads and developing new and improved facilities. My priorities are set out in the department's highway maintenance programme, the States Sustainable Transport Policy and the Road Safety Action Plan, which I intend to review early in my term. The Road Safety Review Panel consider incoming requests; however, the programme is set by the strategic objectives in the previous mentioned documents. Requests, which come through the Road Safety Review Panel, are assessed against how strongly they support those strategic objectives. Where the requests support the objectives, they are likely to be included in the future programme. We need to spend £7.5 million on maintenance schemes to stand still and we allocate over £1.5 million on road safety schemes and improvements. I think this is a reasonable budget and strikes a reasonable balance within the needs and demands on States spending.

3.3.1 The Connétable of Grouville:

Will the Minister commit to ensuring that any measures that are in the pipeline, as highlighted by my written question today on the same subject, will not be put further down the list if other proposals are brought forward?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

That is an excellent question. The short answer is no, not if it can be helped. If there is an emergency that comes up obviously we have to prioritise. But, as I say, everything goes through the Road Safety Review Panel, which is an internal panel within the Department for Infrastructure, which prioritises all construction and remediation of this kind. But unless something really drastic happens, I would agree with the Constable, so no.

3.3.2 Connétable D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence:

The Minister referenced well-maintained roads in his response. Will he give us his definition of what "well-maintained roads" means?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Absolutely. We needed to spend more money on the roads, that is obvious. We are doing our best. As I just pointed out, we need to spend £7.5 million on maintenance fees. That is just to stand still. Basically, I think if the Constable is referring to the whole road system, as a whole, to bring the whole system up to date, I would need an extra, I think £7.5 million for at least the next 7 years, just to bring roads up to a good standard. But we are playing catch-up and we are doing the best we can.

3.3.3 Connétable D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence:

I am trying to establish whether the Minister believes that spending money on ... he said £7.5 million, I think, to stand still. Does that mean resurfacing, just resurfacing, because we know our main roads under D.f.I. (Department for Infrastructure) are in bad condition, or does he mean engineering projects to improve the standard of the roads themselves?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

We deal with both. Sometimes the road structure itself has degraded so far the whole thing needs to be dug up and re-laid, and sometimes we just need a covering on the road, just to give it another few years. We do have a product called Gripfibre, which is sprayed on the road, and that extends the life of that road for maybe another 10 years. We do have, periodically, a vehicle that comes from the U.K. with sort of ground penetrating radar that can see the actual substructure of the road and whether the whole road needs to come up, or not. The main roads are prioritised as they take the most burden of heavy traffic, but ongoing we are trying to maintain the roads in the best condition as we can.

3.3.4 Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour:

Because this is about road safety projects, does the Minister agree that while there is a prioritisation process that to relook at the policy in schemes that are, for example, over 10 years old, which again constantly gets something else shunted in front of them, just start getting some extra points and to allow them to finally get up the priority list to finally get done, because we have some projects which have been rattling around for quite some time, which never get looked at? Does the Minister agree that that policy should be addressed?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

We are playing catch-up, constantly. I think Deputy Maçon is referring to Longueville Road, which is scheduled for September. That will be done. There are several roads that have been suggested by other Members, namely Deputy Higgins came in to see us recently regarding the Inner Road. That is in the programme. I know Deputy Tadier had a road that he needed looking at. That is in the programme for 2019. All safety programmes are looked at and prioritised by the safety panel, but we will get to everything as soon as we possibly can.

3.3.5 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

Does the Minister believe that Members, who support a low tax, low spend economic model, and also vote for budget cuts to all departments in this Assembly, including the Minister's own department, should expect to have roads, which are worthy of a higher tax, higher spend economy?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Straying slightly outside of the question there. We need sufficient to do the roads, so we are doing the best with the budget we have. We can always do with a bigger budget, that goes without saying, but I do not believe in putting taxes up any higher than we have. As I say, we do the best with what we have, and I think we are making headway.

3.3.6 The Connétable of Grouville:

Does the Minister agree with me that when States Members have new suggestions for new road safety measures that they approach his department and go through the proper channels, by using the Road Safety Panel, rather than bringing propositions to this Chamber?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes, indeed, I agree 100 per cent with the Constable. As I have just mentioned, with Deputy Higgins, I have an open-door policy if anyone has a particular project that they wish us to look at, we are more than happy to look at that. But, there is a process and a procedure to go through and I would be very grateful if Members would observe that.