



Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Public Hearing

Witness: The Minister for Infrastructure

Wednesday, 6th September 2023

Panel:

Deputy S.G. Luce of Grouville and St. Martin (Chair)

Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade (Vice-Chair)

Connétable D. Johnson of St. Mary

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat of St. Helier North

Witnesses:

Deputy T. Binet of St. Saviour, The Minister for Infrastructure

Mr. T. Dodd, Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure

Ms. E. Littlechild, Group Director, Operations and Transport

Mr. T. Daniels, Director, Jersey Property Holdings

[11:01]

Deputy S.G. Luce of Grouville and St. Martin (Chair):

Welcome, Minister, to this quarterly hearing, an opportunity for the panel to put a wide range of questions to you. But before we start, I am just going to run through my side of the table and then if you would run through yours, that would be good. Obviously I am Deputy Steve Luce, Chair of the Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel. With me today I have ...

Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade (Vice-Chair):

Mike Jackson, member of the panel.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat of St. Helier North:

Deputy Mary Le Hegarat, member of the panel, St. Helier North.

Connétable D. Johnson of St. Mary:

David Johnson, Connétable of St. Mary, member of the panel.

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

Tristan Dodd, Head of Transport, Highways and Infrastructure.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Tom Binet, Minister for Infrastructure.

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

Ellen Littlechild, Group Director, Operations and Transport.

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

Tim Daniels, Director of Jersey Property Holdings.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Thanks very much. Before we get down to the specific questions, Minister, it is just over ... well, this time last year we were coming from a summer break after being freshly elected and you had had a summer to consider your priorities. I just wanted to ask, after 12 months of active office, where have you found the biggest challenges? I mean, that may take the whole hour and a half, but I do not know.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

It might well do. A major challenge, as you can probably understand, is the hazardous waste problem at La Collette. That really gave us some anxious moments because I think we came within a hair's breadth of closing down the building industry, but I think we have significant progress on that. I am as pleased with the outcome to date as I can be, because there was never going to be an easy solution to it, but hopefully going forward there is an understanding of where we are. The one good thing to come from it, I think, is the fact that we are now very, very much more conscious about how we are going to have to deal with hazardous waste going forward. The obvious issues are Gas Place, for example, where I am led to believe there is a fairly high quantity of hazardous waste, and the waterfront development. With the limitations that sit before us going forward, I think we may have to take a very careful look at the way those 2 areas are developed and the extent to which we do or do not choose to fill up the remaining stock area that we have, so ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

We are going to come to La Collette during the questioning, so we will have some more specifics, but in very, very general terms, how have you found things? Do you have enough money? I mean, there is an obvious question and we know what the answer is going to be, I guess.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I think with infrastructure you can argue that you are never going to have enough money in the real world. I will say this: the message we have been sort of shouting from the rooftops loud and clear and I think we have had a better reception. Going forward there is a better view of the problems that we have got, a more flexible approach and some increase in our funding. We are probably going to come to this, charges and stuff for various things. Some of it is going to relate to us finding our own money, but there is certainly a better understanding of some of the challenges that we face, and the fact that we have been too underfunded for far too long, so there is some making up to do. That all takes time to piece together, but I think the message has been received and understood, so I am quietly optimistic, if I can be.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Final general question before we get down to the specific issues: as a new politician coming in from the private sector, what is your biggest surprise that you found when you suddenly were dropped into government?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Nothing I am prepared to talk about here. No, it is not a great deal different to what I might have expected. There are a lot of problems. You have got practical problems, you have got personality problems, not a great deal different to the private sector. Your customer base is the population and your business is what you are running to deliver the services that people want and expect and are paying for, so quite a lot of similarities, really. Yes, I hope that makes a certain amount of sense to you.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

No, that is fine. I am sure we are going to touch on a lot of those issues as we work through our question plan. The first item on the list that we want to talk briefly about, sustainable transport, and the last time we met we were advised that the roadmap was on track and would be published in June, but can you advise us when it is going to be published and the reason for the delay?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Yes. We wanted to make sure that it was right. As you know, we have basically a very, very small group of people working on this and it is going to be published as sort of next steps. That is just simply a resource thing and I think we are pretty much ready to go with it. Is that safe to say?

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

It is not far out, is it?

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

I believe it is not far out. I mean, the actual documents produced by the Strategy Policy Team, who are not represented here today, I have seen drafts of the document and it looks to me very close to finishing, but they have got processes to follow before it is ready to be issued.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

But given the importance of sustainable transport, climate emissions, climate change and everything that goes with it, is the delay purely down to resource? Is it down to numbers of people or finance, the money available to complete the review?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Not the money to complete the review. I think there has been issues with ... and while you could get the review out quickly, there have been issues about getting enough money to do anything with the review once it comes out, because what my findings are 12 months on is that we have been charged with coming up with an awful lot of policy and an awful lot of ideas without really looking down the line and having the confidence that we have got the money to do anything with them. But as I say, that has started to change and we are in discussions with Treasury about having more flexibility within our budget so that money becomes more transferable, so if something is not spending its way through the amount of money, it can come into a different section.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Would sustainable transport come under the heading of a climate emergency? I mean, would there be monies in that pot that you could be looking at?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

If you are able to get any money out of the Climate Emergency Fund, you are a better man than me. It seems to be almost impossible to access.

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

Yes. What I would say is this: a good foundation in terms of there is a suite of sustainable transport documentation that has been published by the States of Jersey already, so that gives us the basis

from which to work from. When you are talking about infrastructure, because it is very high capital cost initially but lasts for a long time, so to create the type of changes we want to see we have put bits into the Government Plan for that funding. The Climate Emergency Fund has been allocated on the priorities set by Ministers previously and that is starting to now come to fruition, where there are now grants for electric vehicles, there are grants for electric bikes and so on. That is part of the rapid decarbonisation of the fleet or how people move in Jersey. There are other measures which are not to do with transport that I am aware of as well.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay, but surely we are all hugely conscious that this is coming down the road at us - there we are, the roadmap coming down the road - at vast speed. We have got to act. It is fine having policies, but if you cannot fund them, there is not much point in having a policy. Funding is desperately needed and surely the Climate Emergency Fund is there to be accessed. It is disappointing to hear the Minister say that the considerable monies which are in that fund are not available.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Yes. I think there is a certain amount of feeling that perhaps we should be delivering our side of the policies from within our budget. I think that is an unreasonable assumption.

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

As I said, the fund and its priorities were previously allocated, so we are getting some money from the Climate Emergency Fund which is funding some prototype bus services, which is to see how many vehicles they can get off the road by running new routes. There is one running up Grands Vaux. It has also funded other measures such as Love to Ride and these things, but the infrastructure funding at the moment I think is probably sort of beyond the capability with all these other commitments to fund the emergency fund. Our Climate Emergency Fund is obviously overseen by the Minister for Environment. I think those questions could be properly put to him, in some sense.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay, last question on sustainable transport - very briefly, if you could, Minister, and maybe Tristan can update us - electric buses.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Tristan knows a lot more about the detail about how they are going to be utilised and so on. We have 2 electric buses. I went down with the team and had a look at them. They looked great, they seemed to be the right size and very nice buses they are, but you have got the detail. I think you will explain it properly.

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

Yes. So we have basically been running a trial with some Mellor buses on the Island. You may have seen them circulating. They are very nicely appointed inside. There is strong demand for electric buses, as you can imagine, worldwide at the moment. We have managed to secure 2 and they will be coming into service in the near future. They are going to support the town service, but they are also going to be interworked with other services so we get some idea of their performance Island-wide, the review as to what the future fleet is going to look like.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Has this needed an amendment to the contract with LibertyBus in terms of funding? I presume they are funding the purchase.

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

It is done via ... so you can vary the contract, so the contract variation order is in the process of being drafted. We are probably talking about this a little bit prematurely, but yes, there is an agreement in place. Yes, it will be funded within the funds that have been allocated to the bus contract.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

This will help feed any decisions with regard to upcoming negotiation of the contract, I would hope.

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

Exactly. We are in the midst of a tender process at the moment and this will provide more data as to what kind of fleet we need, what performance we will get out of it and what infrastructure we need to support that fleet.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

But certainly this is a step forward because previously ...

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

Absolutely.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

... we have only had trials, but you are saying we have got 2 buses coming and they will go into the fleet, go into the timetable and be used and we will use that data to move forward.

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

Yes.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Yes. As we said, they are pretty expensive, are they not? A third of a million each, I think, something of that order.

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

Yes, electric buses are still significantly more expensive than internal combustion vehicles.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

If you can remind me how many buses we have got in the fleet.

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

Oh, I could not tell you accurately, but it is in the region of 80 vehicles in service, yes.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Yes, 70 to 80 vehicles is the figure. Even if you just do the sums, they are twice the price at full electrification plus the charging mechanisms. I have to say, we are doing some good work with J.E.C. (Jersey Electric Company) as well, which is pressing forward to try to make sure that we have got the facilities available for electrifying cars.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Can I just pick up on those charging mechanism facilities? Will they all be based at the bus station or will they have to have outliers, if you like?

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

We have been over to London to look at one of the depots there that has been electrified. The way they are able to operate in London is that it is basically they are charged within the depot and the way the buses are scheduled allows them to come in to do a top-up charge if required. Now, London is obviously much bigger than Jersey. In some instances they have to have a charger at the end terminus of a route, but I do not think that is what we will require in the Island.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

That could involve some significant infrastructure work to make that happen if it was right at the end of the electricity line.

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

I think the great advantage that Jersey has got is that the bus depot is so close to where the cables come ashore in the old power station, so the infrastructure costs ... because a lot of the infrastructure costs in the U.K. (United Kingdom) is cabling to get to the point where you have the chargers, so we will not have such high costs for that, so it just comes down then to the mix of chargers you have. Certainly in the depot we saw they have got very high rate chargers and then much lower rate chargers and they can play games with them which helps prolong the battery cell life, but I cannot give you the detail.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay, just a very quick question about chargers, which the last conversation has brought me to. Am I right in thinking - or are we right in thinking - Minister, that all the car chargers in car parks and so on around the Island at the moment have been put in by the J.E.C. at their cost and that Government have not paid to invest money in car charging per se at this point at all?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I have to say, that is the case, to the best of my knowledge, but I have to defer to somebody who knows the points of detail.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I mean, a quick answer: have Government put money into buying their own chargers, yes or no?

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

No, Government have not provided chargers within the public car parks, but we have worked with J.E.C. and we have worked on publicising and marketing those. The J.E.C. look to recover that cost from charging for the electricity.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay. The reason I asked the question ...

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

Just one final point.

[11:15]

We do provide eco-permits and so we are forgoing revenue by allowing electric vehicles to park in the car parks for free at the moment, but also on those spaces. So while there is not a direct contribution to the charger, we are effectively subsidising that charger by forgoing that revenue from those charging spaces.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

The reason I asked the question is that yesterday I met a couple of very disgruntled local people who were trying their best to access a charger in a public carpark with an app, finding it very difficult, not very user-friendly. They said to me: "Why can't we just have a simple charger where you pay your money and the power goes into the car?" So the question I have for you, Minister, from the Government's perspective is that, alongside the J.E.C. investing money in charging points where people have to sign up with the J.E.C., should the Government not be putting in chargers which people can just go up and buy power regardless of having to sign up to other schemes?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I do not know if there is anything to be gained by having 2 suppliers. It sounds to me as though the J.E.C. system is not easily accessible, because an easily accessible system is exactly that. My question would be why is it that people are having trouble accessing a J.E.C. station.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Then I would come back to you and say do you think it is right that the Government does not put its own money in and we are relying on a private company to invest in chargers and then people have to buy power from that private company?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I think that is quite acceptable, given that that private company is a private company of sorts, but by virtue of its shareholding we do own 60 per cent, and we have got a single supplier. In an Island of 103,000 people, I think it makes sense not to run into duplication. I think for me the main question is: why does the J.E.C. system not work as it should? That is something where we need to look at that to make sure the company have been ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay, so we need to look at the customer experience, because this person said to me: "How do we promote the Island as a tourist destination? If I am a local and I cannot make this work, how is somebody who is ..."

The Minister for Infrastructure:

To be fair, it is the first ...

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

As I understand, J.E.C. almost have been undercharging now. Say there is 100 charging units across the Island, they are not being utilised so I think that is a customer piece. It is trying to understand what is going wrong, why people are not using those points that are readily available.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay. That is for another day and I do not want to go there today. We mentioned bus contracts and another contract that you spoke to us about quite recently, Minister, was the contract for the scrap metal. Can I just ask where we are with that? Because you were reviewing the contract, we understand. Is there an update on that?

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

Other than that we are going through the tendering process for that at moment. We have not yet determined ... so we are going through the process. We have not yet determined who will be the preferred supplier, so we are going through that process and seeing who ... you know, we have got some good companies that are interested within that work, but we are not at a decision point yet to say if there is any changes.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

The last thing I just want to ask on that is I hope that we are considering the possibility of recycling car parts. Certainly a few decades ago it was possible to go to the scrap merchants and wander through their sheds and say: "Oh, there is a wing or a rear-view mirror" or a seat out of a particular car: "Can I buy that second-hand?" That facility has not been available in recent years and certainly the public I think would appreciate the ability to recycle car parts. I hope that will be part of your thought process as you renegotiate.

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

We will definitely look at that, yes.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Are there any changes to the structure? Clearly there is the change from the previous arrangements at Bellozanne and now it is at La Collette. Do you envisage any changes to the format that has been used for the past few years?

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

I think it depends on who is the successful company that takes that over. Obviously there could always be changes. We still have to provide a service and ideally we do it 5½ days a week and we would be expecting certain things still to continue. But again, with a new company or whether the

same company, we would look at innovation and look at what they are likely to change or improve on that.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

We are going to press on because we are already way behind the time schedule. Deputy Le Hegarat is going to ask about the Grands Vaux and flooding.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Yes. During our last quarterly hearing we were informed that there are a number of different projects the Infrastructure and Environment Departments are working closely with Jersey Water on. In respect of the Grands Vaux flooding incident, we were advised that recommendations would be made by the middle of August, early September. Can you update us in terms of where you are in relation to these recommendations and if you are able to share these with us now?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I think we can share some. I think a report is being formulated, I think due for completion in time for our meeting with the residents. Have you got a firm date for the ...

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

Looking at the end of September, so it has been pushed back. We have just been waiting for some of the detail, the hydrologist report, so both Jersey Water and Infrastructure have now received all the reports. We are commenting on those reports and we are hoping for a final report to be produced by the end of September, but in the meantime with the work we have been doing there have been some improvements, so we have got better cleaning regimes of the gullies and stuff like that when we know that we have got severe weather. Jersey Met have made some big improvements there so we are getting more detailed rainfall warnings, groups are getting set up earlier, we are looking at the data on rainfall, so we are trying to be a lot more proactive upfront. I think what we are hoping from the report is to see what is the engineering, what can we do to change and if there is anything that we can do to manage the reservoir better longer term.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I think that question 4 has probably been answered as well then.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Correct.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Can I just come in on flooding? You mentioned in the previous conversation that there were lots of mitigations that could take place, for instance, hard driveways were contributing to run-off into the public service water system. As statutory consultees, will the department be responding to planning applications and commenting on those sort of situations as well as the drainage connections, which they do as a matter of course?

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

We are ... sorry, Minister.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

No, fine. I have got a few comments, but you carry on.

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

The team are commenting more on damages from the drainage connections and we are working with our planning colleagues to see how that can be improved because we need to not just comment on these applications upfront about what is required, but also making sure that that work gets done and we are all happy with what is happening at the end. So we are looking at increasing our resource to provide better support there because the applicants want that and want more of a speedier response and we want to be making sure that they are doing the right things, so we are looking at that particular resource and looking at how we are improving that. We are still working through these issues with the Planning Team as well at the moment.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

It would be useful that share that knowledge with the Parish Roads Committee, which has a similar situation, so that they in turn do not contribute to the excess surface water.

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

Okay.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I think the issue is relative to Grands Vaux. The unfortunate fact is I understand it is the biggest catchment area.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

By far.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

It is a rural area, so there is not a lot of contributory driveway factors in that area and it is the smallest reservoir with a lot of buildings underneath the reservoir wall, so it is a very unfortunate set-up from start to finish. Yes, I mean, I have been looking at this the whole way through the summer and the elephant in the room for me - I am just talking personally here because I am not trained in anything, as it happens - but when I look at a reservoir that has no capacity when the flood comes, I just really cannot get my head around how and why the reservoir cannot be used in itself as a mitigating measure by reducing the level. We have had some interesting discussions over the course of the summer. I was not sure if that was your question 4.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

No.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

No. But yes, so that will be the interesting one when it comes to having the meeting there with the residents, because ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

On that vein then, Minister, are you saying that you would like to persuade Jersey Water to use Grands Vaux Reservoir as a ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Well, I am on sensitive territory here. Perhaps it should worry me more than it does, but I was very upset that Jersey Water stood up at the last meeting and informed people that it would not be possible and it would cost a fortune and 25 per cent of the Island's water would be at risk. I found that quite shocking. We had agreed not to say anything until the evidence had been fully analysed, but there was a breaking of ranks, so ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay. Well, we can hold that in abeyance and we will certainly come back to that, because that is quite an interesting view.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I do not mind being on the public record that I have got misgivings about their approach to this. As I say, we have got 2 experienced people from Jersey Water, employees, yes.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Certainly from the panel's point of view, I can say that we are just talking to the Minister about future water capacity and future water usage and we are very aware that in the not too distant future Jersey

Water are going to have to make a decision about where they want to be in 2035, 2040, 2045. One of those options might be another reservoir, it might be alternative use of water and that would fit in with that, so we will certainly lodge that one and come back to you on that.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

That is fine.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

On another water issue, but one coming from the other direction, the Constable has got some questions on shoreline management.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Yes. In our last quarterly hearing we heard there were 10 key projects relating to shoreline management. Can you just give us an update on those discussions and where we are on those matters? Tim, a question for you.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Once again, go through the detail, then I will make a couple of what I would call political comments at the end, if that is all right.

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

So it is these attachments on the infrastructure portfolio. So the shoreline management policy or management came out, I think it was around 2018, something like that. There it provides a spatial analysis of the areas of the Island most at risk and ranks them in terms of that risk. That is what we are working to. We have put some funding bids into the Government Plan to now move that forward to the point where it becomes schemes and we can consult on those schemes with the public. At the moment we are anticipating that we will get £750 million in 2025 to start that work, but there is work going on in the background and we would aim to start the first construction project towards the end of this decade, so about 2027, 2028.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Do you envisage that that will be sufficient in terms of funding, that £750,000? That will be for consultation, but because these schemes are expensive, are they not?

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

Yes, they are very expensive and so that is to start the design process. There is further funding in the plan for future years, which will be the subject of ... in terms of being finalised for future years, but this information will be set out within the Government Plan. There is also an opportunity of

getting lots of other benefits at the same time because it is not just a case of having to construct huge walls to protect these areas. These schemes can provide other opportunities, in providing promenades, landscaped areas and space for sustainable transport and so on.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Where does the evidence which is going to feed your work come from? There seems to be a lot of anecdotal evidence from climate specialists, but the practical evidence on the ground does not always seem to agree with that.

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

So you have the basis of the Shoreline Management Plan, which was really the information coming out of the scientists within the United Nations, and then we have our own consultants who help advise what that will mean for the Island in terms of local modelling in terms of wave energy. I mean, wave energy is the biggest risk to the Island. As the still level water of the tides get higher, that allows more wave energy to propagate in, which means more overtopping and the potential for coastal inundation, particularly around St. Helier, the Havre des Pas area and West Park area, where we have had flooding in the past. So those are our priorities, to protect that housing there. We have that modelling in terms of what it would look like for Jersey and now what we are starting to do is to look at the type of structures and measures you can do to prevent that overtopping. There is a combination of different measures you can put in place. You can put in place features that absorb wave energy, features that reflect wave energy and then features that will trap that water to stop it going into the residential areas if it does overtop the wall. So it is a combination of all of the above.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

The political angle on this ... and I was just reading some of the refresher notes this morning about some of these projects. You asked what my sort of findings are a year in. In relation to this and to many other things, I have really got some concerns that when I arrived there were all sorts of projects being bandied about, big capital projects, everybody was going to be doing everything and I think working closely on the hospital project has brought capital funding into real focus, not just with me, but I think the Treasury have really been having a much, much closer look at where we are in terms of funding in the current climate. I think we already knew that there were problems afoot 12 months ago and I think we are realising now that we are into a very long-term period of difficulty. I just wonder if we are not going to have to revise a lot of the things that we are doing and a lot of the way we are going to approach capital. I am afraid ... I think scheme 1 was £70 million, was it, if my memory serves me correctly?

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

Yes.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I am just looking at the hospital project over 10, 12 years, which may stretch to another year or 2 because of the funding situation. We are going to be putting this in, we are putting 2 primary schools in, we are looking at doing the blue light facilities and I just think that we need to possibly all sit around and work out how we are going to do some of things a little less expensively. This is a conversation I have not had with the team. It was just thoughts that were running through my mind over the weekend and today in looking at this and sort of putting the numbers together.

[11:30]

We are going to have to face the fact that some of those big sums are not going to be there.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

The blue light facility, just to take one, Minister, is an individual one-off item and if it got done, it would be done and that would be lovely.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

There are lots of them.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Yes. Well, the Shoreline Management Plan involves a series of, let us say, £100 million schemes, which are just almost an ongoing cost to the department and the Island. While a blue light facility or a school is wonderful, they are very much individual special items, whereas shoreline management is going to be billions and billions of pounds.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

That is what I am saying. It is going to be a lot of money and you cannot really do without decent blue light services and you do not want 4,000 homes on ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

No, and I am not saying that we are comparing the 2. I mean, not that I am an accountant, but in my accounting brain it is a special item, a blue light facility, special item, school, but we are going to have so many special items when it comes to shoreline management. It is an annual recurring cost.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

We are agreeing violently here. It is a problem. I think something we might have to do is to look at these schemes and look at how we might try and do them less expensively. I do not know if that is

possible. I am sort of having a bit of an open discussion with you perhaps before I should be with the team, but the fact is there are going to be some difficulties from a capital point of view.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Selling your argument, if you like, and convincing other Council of Ministers members to support you, and given there is not really much evidence to demonstrate the risks that there are at the moment, I mean, if we look around the Island, yes, if we have a storm one part of the Island might be affected, depending on the tide winds and all the rest of it. Are you confident that the evidence being produced is, shall we say, right and proper or whether there should be any checks given? We talk about a 20 centimetre rise in the next 20 years, but we cannot see evidence of it and it is difficult to be convinced by that, in my opinion.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

It is not a question that I can really answer. In fairness, to some extent you have got to mainstream science and that is what I would say as a rule of thumb. However, against that background we have got to make sure that whatever we do we are as cost effective as we can possibly be and that is where the focus has got to be. There is a big risk. I go to the Havre des Pas meeting most months and if I turned up there and said: "We are not going to do anything for coastal defence because we do not really believe this science" and within the next 12 months there is a huge storm on a 12-metre tide and 4,000 homes have flooded, I am going to look a bit stupid. So you have got to bear in mind ...

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Yes, but I think in terms of science, I fully take what you say, but it has got to be peer-reviewed science and that does not seem to be always the case.

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

So the basis that we work from is science which I understand - I am not a scientist - is robust, that is subject to public and peer review, having been produced by the United Nations and gone through all those processes. It is also backed up by empirical evidence. We can see that the ice sheets are melting, that glaciers are retreating and it is obvious from that that water goes somewhere. It goes into the sea and then the world is seeming to get warmer, there is the latest report this year, and then of course you do get thermal expansion of the oceans through that, which again raises the sea levels. The trouble with this is ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Yes. I mean, my view would be that the Island has been naturally quite fortunate in the last few years to not have a bad storm with low air pressure coincided with a very high tide and the winds in

the wrong direction. Last weekend was a classic example of a very, very high tide and the water is absolutely flat and there is no pressure.

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

That is the point I really wanted to make. In some respects, because this infrastructure takes such a long time to realise from inception to delivery, if you wait for it to happen and say: "Oh yes, we need one now" you have burdened yourself with a whole load of other costs, with having to relocate 2,000 families and use up a lot of hotel capacity in the Island. The seawater is far more damaging to the properties than freshwater flooding and so you have got a year or more where people cannot return to their homes. So the actual risk of not doing it is very high as well.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

So really what you are talking about is a 20-year or 50-year plan, would you say, in terms of the infrastructure build, in light of the ...

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

It is in 3 phases, is it not? Yes.

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

I think phase 1 is a 20-year plan. What we seem to have got through the Government Plan at the moment - subject obviously to the States decision - is funding to start with Havre des Pas as part of this piece of work, and in the meantime we will work certainly on St. Brelade and St. Aubin with the parishes. We are starting to do some of that work now to start seeing what is the money and where are we going to be spending that longer term. Havre des Pas is one of the bigger projects and will cost a lot of money, as we have already mentioned, but there are also some smaller projects and there is other types of mitigation that Tristan mentioned, that instead of doing the walls and stuff like that, what we can do to prevent the water getting to those houses and other things. So we will look at everything to try and make it as reasonable as we can financially.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

This is going to revert back. You have already answered part of this, but we regularly on the Planning Committee ... and this came up again yesterday, is the shoreline. Of course there is a number of properties at St. Clement going east which are potentially being redeveloped. We talked about the facts of not only the drainage but also hardstanding; what about the actual building up close to the foreshore? Do you comment on those?

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

Yes.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

You are already commenting on those, okay.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Could I just ask - and maybe it is a question for Tim, Minister - when it comes to a planning application currently that is close or near or on the actual seawall itself, let us just say at Havre des Pas or Grève d'Azette, is it the legal position that a landowner is allowed to build on the seawall or are they at this current point in time supposed to stop construction a certain distance away from the seawall?

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

There is a well-understood relief. Depending on where you are on the seawall sort of infrastructure, there is a well-understood definition of what the foreshore is that the lawyers and the planners are aware of. You are not allowed to encroach on to that seawall. In the past there have been licences and agreements made that would allow in certain cases people to develop either close to or in the area of the seawall, but those agreements always include the right of the Minister to develop sea defences, if necessary.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay, that is clear.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Still staying on the beaches, but moving on to sea lettuce. Have you had much sea lettuce over the summer?

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

Not compared to last year.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

So do you think that the mitigations you put in place have worked in terms of the sewage treatment plant? What has helped, do you think?

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

I think it is the weather on the changes primarily. To date I think we removed 5,000 tonnes last year to this time, and this year we have only removed 870 tonnes of sea lettuce and generally it is a colder May, June or early part of June anyway on that side. So what are often the reasons, it is

generally the temperature, although the temperature in the bay has been roughly the same, so it is challenging, is it not?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

What about disposal; how is it being disposed of at the moment?

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

Obviously we do the surf rake and we are cleaning the beaches where we can, and then we have also got a contract where the sea lettuce that can go out to land gets taken to land and the farmers want it, so we are able to do that. We manage it the best we can. Very little goes down to La Collette now, so generally what we cannot clean up goes back out on to land.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

From an agricultural background, Minister, do you think it is of much benefit to the land?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Apparently, yes. I have been out for 9 years. It was not a great thing when I was there, but reports that I get back are that it is desirable.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Good. Okay, thank you.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay, so we are changing subject and moving to healthcare facilities. Deputy Le Hegarat.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Yes. Minister, on 4th July you presented the strategic outline case and feasibility study of the new healthcare facilities. In terms of transparency, can you provide the expected costings for the delivery of the new healthcare facilities?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

In the here and now, no, but this has been the subject of a lot of debate in the last week, a lot of pressurised debate about how we go about this. I had said all along that I wanted to be transparent with the figures and that is still the intention. What we are planning on doing - and I am not sure the extent to which I should reveal what is going in the Government Plan, but I think there is no harm in talking about the principle - is that our business case will not be ready until after we have filed the Government Plan, so we are not going to be asking for all of the sums of money for the whole period to be included. What we are going to be doing is asking for a sum of money to take us to a point in

time next summer where we can present the whole thing more comprehensively. But what I have insisted upon is that we produce a schedule that will sit in the Government Plan as an advisory to tell people what to expect, give or take, and that is the approach that we are going to take. So that should be available fairly shortly. That is going to give the ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Over what period of time is that looking forward?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

... 2024 to 2027 period. So what people need to have clarity on and certainty about is the delivery of the acute hospital. That is the piece that is most urgent and that is the piece where we can afford to have no compromise at all. So that is going to be baked in, and there will be a certain sum of money to progress with the other 2 sites as well, but what we had said we would do ... and I have been sort of saying this to a number of people over the course of the time. I am not sure whether I mentioned it the last time we were here. What we do not want to do is give away all of our information to our contractors, so the figures for each year will be available, but there will not be a breakdown between what money is going to what sites, save for the fact that people will know the bulk of the emphasis is bound to be on the acute facility. So the Assembly and the public get to know how much money is being spent every year; they know that at the end of that period the acute facility will be delivered and there will be some progress made on the other 2 areas. So there is transparency about the total amount of money required. Going forward there may be some estimated figures going beyond that but, as I say, I think the sort of financial times in which we live are so uncertain that this might all be subject to some adjustment beyond that period. What we have ascertained is that if we are putting 4 years' numbers in that we are certain those 4 years' numbers can be funded in the here and now. So that is something that we can say categorically we are able to do, so what we are doing is spelling out where we are going and we are doing, so with the ability to back that up. I think in the current climate that is as much as we can do for the time being, but that is the intention, so the numbers will be there. As I said, it will not be to the penny, but they will be pretty much the numbers. Certainly that will be the financial information that we have got available to us at this sort of remit stage 1 moving to remit stage 2. Does that make sense?

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Notwithstanding the numbers, Minister, practical spades in ground: when would you think you might be starting?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

You will have to remind me, but I think the contract for the demolition is pretty much underway, is it?

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

I am not sure of the specific details. We will have to get back to you.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

It is imminent. As I say, we have come from a meeting there this morning.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

As the contracts go on, how confident are you in terms of global uncertainty that contractors will be able to put in fixed-price contracts?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I am not certain that we can run with a fixed-price contract at this stage. It is probably unlikely that anybody is going to give you carte blanche to ...

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

So do you anticipate going down an open-book type arrangement?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Well, that is the sort of ... at the moment we are mapping it through and we are talking to the Treasury all the time and we are looking at different things. Nothing in that regard is cast in tablets of stone at this early stage. But yes, we need to know a little bit more about what it is going to look like and how it is going to function.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

We are going to move on to another ... I was about to call it a States asset, although I am not sure if it is an asset or a liability. Constable Johnson has got some questions about Fort Regent.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Yes. As to Fort Regent, could you begin by updating us, please, on where work is currently at with the structural assessment and condition surveys being carried out? I am sure further questions will arise from that.

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

The actual structure of the roof has been tested and is deemed to be safe. However, the cladding and the stuff that keeps the wind and the rain out has been identified as needing work in various places. The costing of the remediation of that is currently ongoing. So we know that the roof is safe, but to be able to use it for any period of time the skin, as I say, will need replacing and that is being costed.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Is that the entire roof or is that just the glass areas?

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

So the architecturally interesting wavy bit at the dome is supported on sort of lattice on a skeleton. That skeleton is structurally sound.

[11:45]

The bit that sits on it - and it is effectively a sort of sheet of ply with a rubberised finish on top - in areas of that, that is failing or failed. But to replace it we need to understand can you do areas of it, what does that do to the structural integrity, because of the construction.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

But the point I am making, it is not just the glass panes areas of both ends of the structure, it includes the rotunda, it includes the entire roof, where there is bits which are failing and need replacing.

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

Yes, so basically everything from sort of the battlements, the glass, the surrounds, the covering is being costed at the moment for replacement.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

As regards these replacements, are you saying therefore that the whole future cannot be looked at or considered until that is costed and that costing is agreed?

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

What we are doing at the moment is looking at the possibility for the outside areas and what could be done in terms of health and safety of the battlements, the walls, the structures themselves. The intent is to as quickly as possible get to a position where we can start to use the outside area and at least make use of those facilities. In terms of the internal area, then we need to understand, as you say, what the cost is of the roof replace and repair to enable us to understand how we go about using the internal area. There are a number of options, but we do not know what they are until we understand the cost.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

So when are we going to arrive at a figure for costings, which is a prerequisite, before we can decide what to do with it?

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

Well, the expectation is the end of October for that report.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Okay, and the follow-on question is about going out to public consultation for the use. Would that public consultation follow in swift order once you have got your costings?

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

Absolutely, and we are looking to start that consultation for the outside area as well in the very near future to understand what we can do and what people want.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Can I just ask what facilities are still available inside the building or how many more facilities are still to be transferred in the near future?

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

So I cannot give you the exact number. The soft play area, the Jersey Ballet, and there are a number of other small sports clubs, but at the moment the process of moving those organisations out to Springfield and elsewhere continues to proceed on the basis that the Fort is full of asbestos, the wiring is elderly and safety cannot be guaranteed. We are looking at optimising the facilities for the current users, so it is still the intention to move people out to better facilities.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

So the Fort will, in relatively short order, become unused under the roof?

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

Yes, though I think the short order is going to be 12 months or so, and certainly one of the key issues that we have got to find a solution for is the soft play area, the children's play area, and that is a facility that is clearly very popular, widely used, and as we come into the winter it is something that we have got to work very hard on.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Does your structural report indicate whether ... I presume the report says that the roof is safe to have a soft play area underneath?

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

It is safe, but what we cannot guarantee is the drips of rain that come through, so we need to manage that.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Minister, a political question then. We are going to have a report in October which is going to give us a cost to repair the roof. Is there a likelihood that the cost of repairing the roof might be too much to bear and then we face the future without any activities happening under the roof itself?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Without access to that report, I would just be licking my finger and putting it in the air. I really do not know. I suspect that it is one of those where it is going to be a large sum, but not going to be unmanageable, and I suspect we will be under pressure to make it wind and watertight. What we do thereafter ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Well, yes, I was going to say that it will be one thing to find the money to repair the roof at the Fort, but surely that would be short-sighted if there was no plan to then reintroduce activity into the Fort to make use of the new roof.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Absolutely right. This is a major problem whichever way you look at it, because if you cannot find any money to repair the roof, at some point in time you have either got to let the whole thing rot or you have got to dismantle the roof covering and do something else with it, and that is going to cost a small fortune as well. So it is one of those that whichever way you move it is going to cost quite a lot of money and you have got to manage public opinion at the same time. It seems to be a very sensitive area, the Fort. A lot of people are very emotive about it.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

There is hardly a shelf in an office in Broad Street strong enough to hold all the reports of what we are going to do with the Fort.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

No such shelf, no. For every month of the year since it has been built there has been a report undertaken.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

But if we do commit to repairing the roof, surely we would have to also commit to an activity or activities to go under it once we have spent that money?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Well, it is a very big covered area. We are short of covered area in any event, so it would make some sense to spend the money and do some sort of development. I have got a few comments but I can see you are sort of wanting to ...

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Just going back to your comment about public opinion, obviously there is public opinion saying: "Why can some activities not carry on then?" If it is presently safe enough for some activities to continue, was it premature to evict others? Could they have carried on for longer, in fact?

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

Absolutely not. The problem is it is a deteriorating estate so when there is a leak in the water supply, to get access to the water supply you have to pull the roof down, which is full of asbestos, you then trace the leak back and basically it is an unpeeled onion. The effort to remediate what starts off as a small problem snowballs and it was becoming untenable to allow the operation. So it was intended to provide the best facilities and opportunities for the people using the space to decamp them elsewhere and, as I say, Springfield is very successful.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

So the few activities that are being carried on now, you are happy that they are being safely carried out, are you?

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

Yes.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

It is unfortunate the relevant Minister is not here today, Minister. No offence to you, but we seem to have decanted sporting facilities from Fort Regent on the promise of new facilities elsewhere next to Hautlieu and La Rocquier and we have not delivered on that.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Well, to some extent that is not entirely fair. I think a lot of the sport that has been moved out has been well facilitated. We have got Oakfield, which has been out to tender, and I think we are going to get the contract in place certainly before Christmas for work to commence at around about that time.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

But was it not the original intention - and I am tempted to call it "promise" - that that facility would be available when people moved out of the Fort?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

In terms of the timing I am not entirely sure, but we are where we are. Oakfield is going to be finished mid-2025 hopefully, which then should facilitate all the remaining sporting entities that are at the Fort. We come back to the fact that this is something we have had 50-odd years of use out of it and all elements of it are at the end of their useful life and it does not meet any of the standards that would be required now and is full of asbestos. You cannot tackle any of that until you have got the place empty. It is bound to be controversial. People are being denied access to something that they love dearly and they have had a good time in, but the truth is it has reached the end of its useful life, so we have got to go about finding a way of dealing with it. So the way I see it is the shell has to be reinstated and we have to work together to find an internal use. The fact is we talk about consultation, but I am led to believe there has already been a lot of consultation over the course of time. I am a little bit worried about going out for another round of consultation when we have already got a number of ideas about what people want, assuming that a lot of the sporting elements are now reasonably well-facilitated in any event. Another thing that worries me a little bit, you can go and ask people what they want and you could have a list as long as your arm, but that consultation has to be meaningful insofar as that the information you get back has to be applicable to the site. We need to know what is possible in there before you start asking people if they want X, Y and Z ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I appreciate that, but ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

... only to turn around and tell them that you cannot do it because the site is not compatible with that usage.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

By your own admission 30 seconds ago, Minister, you were assuming that sporting facilities have been properly facilitated elsewhere and I would put it to you that I am not sure that is the case.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Perhaps not as well as one might in an ideal world. It relates to a point that I made a bit earlier. When I first came to office there were all sorts of plans being bandied about for Le Rocquier School. People were showing me pictures of a £70 million sporting complex, which I thought was fantastic, we were looking at one meeting after another. Suddenly you find out that we have not got £70 million, we have got a few hundred thousand pounds to restore the sports hall. This is what I am

saying: we need to start collectively having a reality check on what we can and cannot do and not have ideas that we cannot fulfil. So I am having a very cautious approach to the Fort, not promising people hell and all.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Can I come on to Le Rocquier? I had not expected to talk about it, but just a very straightforward question. If we were to spend money at Le Rocquier School on sporting facilities, should those be purely for education and the children in that school or should they be public facilities available to the general public? Because the Minister has been very clear - and I believe probably changed tack - in as much as the original plan was community facilities for the east of the Island at Le Rocquier, which are now very much demoted in the amount of money we are going to spend and are also now exclusively for education use. I mean, surely if you want to try and make best use of the small amount of money we have, we use it for everybody's benefit.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I would say that if that is possible, yes, that should be the case, but I am not sure there is sufficient money to deliver that sort of facility in any event, because that does sit directly within my area.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Well, it is certainly going to be one of those areas that there is going to be lots of pressure for money in the coming months and years and ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Well, this is why I am saying going forward people need to be very cautious about what they are saying when they are going out and promising people things when we have not got the money to do it, because otherwise you end up being the person sitting in the chair disappointing people on the back of some bright ideas that have come from elsewhere.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

That will be you, Minister.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

There you go. So what I am trying to do is I am being as open as I can here so that the message gets out to people that we have to be very careful about our capital spending.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Going back to Fort Regent quickly, given the infrastructure is back into place and the roof is watertight, is there any appetite from private enterprise to go in there, given that we have seen talk about hotels and all sorts going up there? Has that been mentioned?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Yes, and that has been looked at. One of the things that I found quite shocking is that within a couple of months of taking office I was presented with a very large glossy report about Fort Regent done by S.o.J.D.C. (States of Jersey Development Company). The private sector had been involved and there were all sorts of schemes; there was a casino, a hotel. Some very basic questions. I said: "Well, is it viable without a casino?" The answer was a flat no, so that is point one. So I said: "Is it viable with a casino?" The answer was pre-Ukraine war it would have just about washed its face is what I was told. So I said: "Well, we are now into different territory" and that has gone on a long way, so this is a year ago, and I was told: "No, it is not." That lovely report took its place on the shelf and I have yet to meet a person who has read it from cover to cover. I do know one person, because I sat down with somebody and they volunteered to read it all through and make some recommendations. So where we are with that is Future Places, in their wisdom, have given J.D.C. the go ahead to produce another report. I have to say that was not really my intention. What I wanted to do was work with the people within the sports department and our department who have some quite intimate knowledge of the situation to come up with some ideas as to what they thought was practical and deliverable because, I am sorry, but my view is we have got a lot of the answers that we need in-house and it is a lot cheaper to do it that way. So the Future Places report is being compiled at the moment by J.D.C. but we are also doing some in-house work ourselves in parallel, because I would be interested to see what we come up with, based on the knowledge that our own people have about where various sports have gone and what the previous consultations have said and their knowledge of the actual building and what it can and cannot do.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay, I want to try and press on.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Sorry, I am rambling too much.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

No, I have got one more question and it is a very straightforward infrastructure question for Tim, I believe. We have spoken about the roof and you have spoken about battlements and outside areas. Am I right in thinking that some of the water ingress comes from rain that falls on the battlements which is coming between the cracks and then coming into the building?

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

Yes.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Are we looking to remediate that?

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

Yes, it is all part of the remediation plan. If you do not use the rooms under the battlements, because they are full of asbestos and to save money, you just block them off and use the central open spaces, and that is a mitigation. So I think it falls into, as the Minister was saying, what we are going to do with the Fort. I think once you have got an idea of what it is that you want to do, that then helps you understand where you need to spend your money, what you need to focus on in terms of the ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay, thanks. I am going to let David go, unless you have got a final one on the Fort.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Just to recap, the costings will be coming to fruition in October, so we will see some progress after that and some public ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Absolutely.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay. Maybe, David, we could move straight to vehicle testing.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Yes, vehicle testing, which I will whistle through. Yes, can you please advise us where we are in terms of the vehicle testing regime, including plans for a new testing centre, to which you alluded to at the Comité the other day?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

You do the technical bit and I will give a political comment afterwards.

[12:00]

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

There has not been a lot of progress since we have last met on that side. We are doing more kind of the office work of cleaning up the database, which has taken longer than we originally envisaged. There is a lot of work within that space. Also tying into that is all the I.T. (information technology) systems that we need to look at, so at the moment we are going through a bit of a data cleanse and we are still looking at the options of looking at what kind of space do we need in order to do the vehicle testing. So that is where we are at the moment.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

In doing that, are you in discussions with the motor industry or is it still very much in-house?

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

At present there is not much to discuss with the motor industry in some respects, because until we have completed a substantive database cleansing process it is difficult to define what the requirement will be. We have got our user data, but we have been charged to go back and revisit that, so that is what we are doing. Then you can start looking at the size of premises you may need and the type of way you might deliver that, whether it is distributed or there is a central one et cetera.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Going to commercial vehicle testing, which I know is underway at the moment, there has been some questions from those who had to be involved over the frequency. I do not know what the frequency is, but is it ...

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

I do not have those figures to hand. It depends on the type of vehicle it is.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

The suggestion is it is rather more frequent than it needs to be. This came from one of the parishes with quite a large fleet who have all the structure in place, shall we say, to manage that fleet. It was felt that it was a bit over the top. I do not know if that is something you have looked into.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I am happy to talk about that, because that became a political issue. I had quite a lot of angry people phoning me and approaching me about it. So we convened at St. Clement's parish hall and I think 70 people turned up, something in that order. There was a lot of disgruntlement about it. Some contradictions, because some of the moaning was about more organised ones are doing it anyway and others are getting away with it, but you have got a scheme that catches the ones that are getting away with it. It encapsulated everybody, so they all get angry. So what I have done is put things on hold. I suggested that we formed a - for want of a better expression - government representative

team consisting of 2 small operators, 2 medium and 2 large. A message has gone out for expressions of interest to be part of that and having a little electoral process, so there will be 6 people that we can refer to that will be the elected industry representatives. We will discuss the scheme with them and see if we can find some sort of compromise that catches the people that need to be caught, for want of a better way of putting it, it delivers what we need to do from a legal point of view, but is the lightest touch possible and is acceptable to the industry. So we have slowed the process down, but what we are now trying to do is work with the industry directly to come up with a solution that we can live with from a technical point of view and they can live with from an operational point of view, if that makes sense.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Can I congratulate you on that, Minister? Because that is the sort of practical approach we need throughout lots of bits and pieces, and I too had had a lot of approaches about commercial vehicle testing, so I think that is laudable of you to put it on hold and seek a compromise.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Yes. Well, to cut to the final chase then, what timeframe are you working for to have the full input of the vehicle testing scheme in place to comply with the Vienna Convention?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Right, I am going to be very controversial here. We are not putting a huge amount ... we are making progress, we are going as quickly as we can with the resources available, but I am not pressing ahead with this aggressively because we are understaffed, we have got a lot to do, we are in difficult times for people. Introducing charges for people to go and have their vehicle tested when their average speed is 70 miles an hour, maybe I have got it wrong, but I do not see that as a massive priority.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay, but my counter, Minister, would be are you in compliance with the Vienna Convention in taking that view? Because my worry would be that there may be a small percentage of the Island who do it, but somebody who takes their car to France or drives in Spain or Germany and in Europe and they get pulled over and we are accused in Jersey of not following the Vienna Convention and our vehicles cannot drive on the continent.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

There is that risk. As I have said before, my own particular preference is to try and set something up where - and we had a discussion about this earlier this morning - vehicles that go on other people's roads should meet other people's standards and I fully understand that. But in the

discussion that we have had quite recently it is apparent that we would have to introduce a law that no vehicle could leave the Island without a test of that sort. So I do not know if that is true, I do not know how complicated that might be and whether or not it is appropriate to do that in any event. So there we are. There are other areas ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I think all we can do is ask you to keep a close eye on it. Obviously it is laudable that you are looking to not spend money wastefully, nobody wants to do that, but at the same time we do need to look after the interests of Islanders who want to drive on the continent and elsewhere.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I appreciate that completely and if there is a way of doing it practically as an interim measure, then that is what we will look at but, as I say, it has just come to my attention that there might be complications around that. As I say, I have got a team of professional people here - I am not professional - and they want to do everything by the book as soon as possible and I am trying to take a balanced view of not spending too much money before we have to spend it for practical reasons. It is a tension that we are wrestling with all the time, but they are making progress on the data clean-up. As they have said, they cannot specify what is required by way of a testing centre until we know how many vehicles there are and what we are going out to ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

So people go off-Island in order to drive a little bit faster than they are allowed to over here, but Constable Jackson has got some questions about lowering speed limits in Jersey further potentially.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Indeed. So the new petition about lowering speed limits, you will have seen that from a member of the public who wanted us to stop lowering speed limits and suggested the repeated change of speed limits is just causing disruption and confusion throughout the Island. I do not know what your opinion is on the changes to speed limits causing confusion, if that is the case, and to what extent you consider the public consultation on the matter of increasing speed limits as well as general awareness and education of road safety matters could be improved.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Well, I do not mind saying ... I will make the political comment first and then we will have the technical and then I will make some more covering comments. But I would say of all the correspondence I get, this is probably the highest volume, people on the one hand moaning about not wanting to see more reductions and other people telling me in every corner of the Island: "There is an accident waiting to happen; when are you going to lower the speed limit?" So there is a really big tension. It

is becoming confusing because everywhere you go this is now 30, this is now 20. We only this morning had a discussion about the possibility - and I know the press is going to try to make it a headline - because we have got so many 30 mile an hour zones, are we at a stage where we should have a 30 mile an hour speed limit with areas where you can do 40 so you do not have to have increasing numbers of 30 discs everywhere? As I say, it is a complex issue. Whatever else we have got to do, we have got to put people's safety at the forefront. Sadly, if that means people are having to drive a little bit more slowly, so be it.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Is this more about enforcement rather than reducing the speed limits?

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

Signed speed limits have a role to play in guiding drivers, but the evidence is that signed speed limits on their own do not have a great deal of effect on driver behaviour. Equally, you cannot enforce everywhere all the time, although I saw the police, in conjunction with our road safety people, are looking to acquire some speed cameras and do some work with that. Ultimately I think it is a behavioural change measure so it is about education, it is about providing information, improving training, as well as the road traffic engineering and the enforcement side. It has got to be all of those working together. It is very complicated, I think.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Do you think the courts have a role to play here, Minister? Do the States Assembly have a role to play in changing the law?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Well, one thing I think we need to try and do is get better enforcement, and that is difficult because certainly from a police perspective, given all the issues they have had to deal with, with the explosion and the boat tragedy, they have been under huge pressure. When you are trying to solve those problems it is not easy to go out with a speed gun and start finding people. But I think we need to do more work on enforcement right the way through across the parishes because the greater the danger of getting a speeding fine, the more likely you are to comply, whether there is a sign or not, if you know what you are doing. As I say, there are several issues. Compliance is one, the other is the confusion element. We are changing speed limits continually and it does become more and more complex when you are driving around; you are never really quite sure whether you should be doing 20 or 30 or 40. We are sort of perhaps a long way from doing this, but if we can simplify it and, as I say, there is a possibility that an all-Island speed limit of 30 might make it more simple, but this is the chap that knows.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Am I right in thinking that any area has a maximum speed limit which is exactly what it says on the tin, and that we could not have a 30 across 90 per cent of the Island, while we have still got areas of 40? Because 40 would be the maximum speed limit. You would therefore need to have all your 30 areas signposted at regular intervals because it is not the maximum speed limit on the Island.

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

That would be a question for the law officers; I am not sure if it works that way. You would have a national speed limit and then you would have assigned areas that you could travel at other speeds. I do not know what the answer to that is, but what I would say is throughout my career, it has been a full-time job in dealing with speed limit requests. The Island has undergone an evolution. When cars were first introduced there were not many of them and there was not a speed limit and then there needed to be one and people relied upon the training they were given as drivers to drive at an appropriate speed. But that did not work and there were casualties and so it has become more prescriptive. Fortunately in 2017 all the parishes and the police force got together and agreed what I think is a rational policy of speed levels in different areas and ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Do we have too many different speed limits in the Island?

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

What I was going to say is we have been going through this process and it is quite a large process. We have done it very consultatively, to go through all the parishes, which we are coming towards the end of, and now some of the parishes are asking for a second chance to look at this. But it is becoming more consistent across the Island is the point I wanted to make. Now, the question is can you move from what is becoming a reasonable position to a sort of more data-led, less political view? So we have got the Strategic Road Safety Policy and that is informed by this concept of Vision Zero, and what Vision Zero basically says is if you travel more than somewhere between 20 and 30 miles an hour and you hit someone, you are likely to have a life-changing injury or death. So what measures are in place to enable you to travel higher than that speed? I think it has taken a review of the Island on that basis, which we know that we have got a higher incidence of killed and seriously injured vulnerable road users than in the U.K. and so we have got improvements to make. I think that will be probably the starting point of the next review. It might end up, as the Minister says, where you have a position where you have an Island-wide 30 and exceptions. So we do not know yet is the truth; that work has got to be undertaken. At the moment we are setting up the strategic road safety section, who will undertake that work for us.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Can I just have an opportunity to be cynical? Do you feel that sometimes in terms of speed limit changes they are as a result of, shall we say, a kneejerk reaction post-elections? We see it at every election and budding politicians will always be, shall we say, pinned down on the doorstep by saying: "What are you going to do about the speed limit?" I do not need an answer to that, but the ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

You will get one, like it or not.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

What I am really interested in is technology, because surely technology is getting to the stage with new vehicles that could be limited automatically to a speed limit in an area by some sort of sensor in the vehicle, and I think there are some things in place. Are we moving towards that?

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

I think the majority of new cars are fitted with G.P.S. (global positioning system) and they tell you when you are travelling over the speed limit, so there is certainly, with modern vehicles, less excuses to say: "I did not realise."

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

What I am thinking of more is something that will take that decision out of the driver's hands.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I am so glad you mentioned this because I was sitting here thinking about it and I thought: "Well, I do not want a headline sort of talking about ... people might think it would be science fiction." I think you are right, I think the technology would be there if it was applied properly. Whether people would accept it or not, I do not know. So you really want a situation where your car will not go beyond ... in my own car I have got a little sign that tells me what the speed limit is everywhere. Interestingly, I have got a little button in my dash and when I get to 30 I press it and I travel everywhere now, where I can, at 30 - even in 40 mile an hour areas - and invariably I find myself catching up with the car in front of me when I get to the yellow line or the traffic lines for a car that has gone at 40 miles an hour. I just do it as a point of interest to see what difference it would make in terms of travel time. It might be a frustrating, but in terms of your total journey time it might add a few seconds, not much more. So it is something worth ... there is some work to be done to test this.

[12:15]

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

Vehicle manufacturing standards are now set by Europe effectively for this hemisphere, and they are putting requirements now for all new vehicles from - I think it was - 2026 to have pre-emptive braking and other features and I am sure that type of thing is coming down the road. I do not suppose while you have still got people operating the car you could ever say that you could not travel above the speed limit, but there would be certainly some sort of alarm that would tell you that you were, because while people are in charge they have got to the ability to avoid accidents by whatever means.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Have you looked at Guernsey, of course, which is 35?

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

I think the confusion in number ... I do not think it makes any difference.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I will just quickly say, because of past experience, where at the moment we have 15, 20, 25, 30 and 40, which is confusing for the public, whereas you might end up with a 15 and a 35 quite easily.

Head, Transport, Highways and Infrastructure:

I mean, most countries do it in units of 10 but you could do it from 5 and units of 10. It is the graduation, is it not?

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Well, we have a 5-mile road now, so anything is possible. I am going to jump, Minister - because we are coming close - to the last section, where we wanted to question you, because if we do nothing else, I would like to do this bit. When you came this morning and right at the outset said one of the most challenging bits for you had been La Collette and reclamation and disposal of hazardous waste, bulky waste, we have now got plans for inert waste. The Constable is going to lead off with one question and I am sure we will all have a few more to occupy the last 10 minutes or so.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Could you update us on the ministerial delivery plan for the reclamation site at La Collette, particularly with regard to hazardous waste and the site replacement, if there is any delay in any sphere of the operations down there?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Are we talking long term or management of the current situation?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Well, we know what is going on down there but it is pretty well short term, so what is the longer term?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Well, long term we are back to basically having to look at other exporting, which is prohibitively expensive and a situation where nobody wants to take it in the first place, or finding something inland. The 3 obvious places being looked at currently are obviously the 2 quarries and ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Which particular waste stream are we talking about when you say that, Minister? Inert waste?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

We are talking about inert. In terms of hazardous waste, that once again, as you can imagine, will have to go at some point inland presumably or if we find an alternative area for the inert waste area that we are using currently at La Collette, then there is a possibility of completing that site with a more permanent hazardous waste storage. What we are focusing our initial efforts on now is waste reduction, trying to identify areas where there is hazardous waste and if it can stay where it is, not bringing it and not dealing with it. In other words, stretching out as much as we possibly can the amount of space that we have got left, subject to the planning application being successful.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

So you are saying sites, for example, like Gas Place you mentioned previously, waterfront, west of Albert and obviously a lot of potential plans there, you are saying it may well be that we are not going to develop those sites lower than ground level because we have got nowhere to put ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

These are things we have to look at. If we take in all the hazardous waste that we know exists at the moment ... and I know they have taken the more clever approach to it on the waterfront, they have done test holes, I think every 10 metres, to analyse exactly what is there. Now, I have not had access to that, I do not know if the team have got a better knowledge of precise volumes as the result of the core testing.

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

Not the volumes at the moment, but what we will do perhaps that we have not done in the past is making sure that only hazardous material is coming into the cells and not the mix, so a lot more testing onsite before to make sure you have got the split of what is hazardous and what can be remediated.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I am not wanting to interrupt you, Ellen, but is that not what the intention was with Horizon, for example, and when they started digging it out they found that they had no way of being able to segregate one from the other and the whole lot was disposed of as hazardous waste?

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

But what S.o.J.D.C. are telling us now is that there is material that could be recycled on the new site and there is stuff that will be hazardous and stuff that we have got to deal with. We have got to make sure, from our point of view, that the developers are doing as much as they can in being able to recycle onsite or tying in with the planning that they did out as little as possible, albeit there are some cases where it needs to move and go somewhere on that side.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Would it not be cheaper just to say no underground development at all from word go, regardless of whether it is: "We are moving because we are just moving more bits of Jersey around"?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

As a decision, that is a very easy decision to make, but what we have got to do is be very mindful of what the consequences of that might be in terms of how the whole development works. If you have got it all designed that those basement areas are an integral part of making the development work, sweeping them away does not solve a problem; it means you might have to go back to the drawing board. So we have got to get into some pretty serious discussion with S.o.J.D.C. about what their findings are, what we think can and cannot be separated up into hazardous and non-hazardous. All I am saying, as I made the point earlier, this whole debate has brought these areas into really sharp focus because if the second permit goes through and we can raise it another 4.5 metres that is very, very precious space. It could well be, in the same way as asbestos will eventually run out because we used a finite amount of asbestos here, and once that has all been stripped out the volumes are going to start to go down to a point where eventually there will not be any. We have got to try and take the same view as hazardous waste. We treat our environment a lot more kindly than we used to. I remember when I was a kid there would be oil spillages, diesel spillages; nobody really took much notice. In this day and age it is a very, very different ballgame. So we are creating a lot less trouble now, so there will be a tail off in the amount of hazardous waste, and the question is can we make La Collette work to the extent that it can absorb that which we are going to generate in the foreseeable future or will we need somewhere to go?

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Well, surely the answer ultimately must be we need somewhere else to go because La Collette cannot for ever sustain taking waste.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Well, with inert waste that is absolutely right, because there will always be building demolition and recycling and a certain amount of requirement for permanent ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

But can I press you on inert waste? Because one of my personal concerns at La Collette, now that we are moving through the stage where we are going to have a planning application approved, there is another application to build a large amount of inert waste in the last undeveloped area of La Collette, if you like, the western triangle. I am greatly concerned by putting an enormous heap of inert waste there because I think that particular area of the site is going to come under great pressure to be used for other practical purposes other than inert waste. I do not know what the outcome is, but we know that there will be some sort of announcement about wind farms in the future. One of the reasons I raise this is if at some point in the future Jersey builds a wind farm, and the Minister for the Environment is talking about 8 to 10 years, the power from that farm would have to land in Jersey at some point. The most practical and easiest place to do that would be at La Collette, and in typical States fashion we would probably find that we had just spent the last 10 years filling it up with inert waste and we now needed to move it in order to build a reception building for electricity from our sustainable wind farm. Do you not think that we should not be looking for sites for inert waste, anything other than that particular area of La Collette?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

Just repeat the question: should we not be looking to somewhere else for inert waste?

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Should we not be saying at La Collette in that last little triangle, where at the moment the proposition is to start stacking inert waste, should we not be doing that? Should we not be taking that inert waste somewhere else, to one of these sites which we have identified, which are in private ownership which need negotiation?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I think what we have got to do is we have got to have a fall-back position in any event so that we are geared up to keep going if we need to while we are looking for other sites. I think it is probably fair to say that the possibility of using one or other of the quarries is a reality. Would you not say that is ... particularly La Gigoulande Quarry?

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

I think the concern though in the short term is that until the private sector are ready to take that inert waste, that corner at La Collette will be full. So it is ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

But do we not have a number of major issues coming down the line at us at all probably roughly the same time? The energy from waste plant, what has it got left, 10, 15 years of useful life? Where is the decision about where we are going next? Are we going to have another energy from waste plant? If we are, where is it going to go? Where are we going to land our sustainable energy? Where are we going to have our ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

The replacement of the plant discussions are already underway and thoughts are already taking place as to how that is going to be done. We have not had a conversation about wind energy landing in that particular area. I cannot really figure out why you would want to run it in there because it would then be quite difficult to run it through the site to get it to the power station.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Well, I could be wrong, but what I do not want to do is to find that the Island stopped ...

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I do not know. I am very, very, happy to ... you raise a good question and I ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I mean, it is only mooted that we might have a wind farm but it seems like a very practical and sensible suggestion to me.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

It is another big investment, as I say, but that would be perhaps differently funded.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I think, focusing on the point, have you got a 15, 20, 30-year timeline for La Collette? Because at the moment there seems to be a bit of firefighting.

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

I think for hazardous waste and inert waste you are looking at probably a hazardous waste 5-year timeline until it is full, inert waste less than that. As we know, we know that Grand Products are interested in taking on inert waste, but they talk 2, 3 years away until they are going to be doing that.

In the meantime there is no other short-term option. I think we do need to work on a La Collette masterplan which will probably pick up all those different infrastructure needs and I think that is probably required.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Just picking up on inert waste, we walked past Broad Street and see these big piles of waste ready to be dealt with. At our visit to La Collette some months ago the comment was that the industry just are not taking the recyclates that are being producing, for whatever reason. Can that be advanced in any way so that those recyclates can be reused in building?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

There are problems and Ellen will explain.

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

Yes, I think the industry does take a lot of recycled product, so we are probably quite successful in Jersey. I think Alan has done a fantastic job, him and his organisation. If you compare what we are doing with inert material and how we recycle it to Europe and the U.K. we are probably leading in looking at that. I am not saying that there is not more that we can do. I think over the last 6 months there has probably been a bit of a downturn in the industry on some of that type of material on people doing big builds and big jobs, and I think not just with Alan, but if you are speaking with G.P. (Granite Products) and Ronez, the industry has got quieter. Again, I think, as the Minister may have been referring to, for certain types of structural concrete you have to have certain grade and there is only a certain amount you can recycle. So depending on the job you cannot use that type of recycled material. I think where we can, so in driveways and different things, we do use it and we do use it well in Jersey. But again, whether it is the market in Jersey or looking elsewhere, I think for inert waste, whether this is an option at all in the short term, we are certainly looking at is an option perhaps maybe to export some inert waste. What would the cost of that be and suchlike, is there a demand for inert material outside ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

But surely, Ellen, if we are about to embark on a very long - and decades long - programme of reinforcing our sea defences, the last thing we need to be exporting is inert waste when we could be using it to defend the Island.

Group Director, Operations and Transport:

Yes, but some of that is we have got a lot of inert waste still at La Collette and you can start seeing some of those areas. You know, if we are going ahead with the Havre des Pas project, have we got enough material in order to not have the big hill, but use some of that material for Havre des Pas?

We have got the hospital project where you have got an awful lot of tonnage coming through. So we have got a lot of material coming through over the next few years and I do not think ideally anybody wants that big corner of waste and corners out. Where can we use that and can we stockpile in the short term to be able to use on other projects?

Deputy S.G. Luce:

It is really good to hear you thinking 10, 20, 30 years ahead because I think historically the Island has not always been great at doing that and we have made decisions and regretted them later because we could have done better. I know hindsight is a wonderful thing. I have one final question, Minister, before we finish and it relates to aerated concrete. Obviously big discussions with schools and other public buildings in the U.K. in the last week, 10 days. Can I ask yourself probably, Tim, are we aware of any aerated concrete structures within the public domain?

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

Clearly we are very interested in making sure we get this one right. The issue was first raised in March earlier this year as an issue across the U.K. and at that point we did an investigation across the estate to see if the material had been used. We do not believe it has been used. We have spoken to both Ronez and Granite Products, who have not produced it and have not imported it. We have spoken to local structural surveyors if they are aware of the material in any of their dealings with design or structures and they are not. We are in the process of going through our estate and looking at the dates of construction and anything from the mid-50s to the mid-90s that has got a flat roof we will do a quick inspection of the documents that we have got to see if the material was specified or used. If there is anything that we are uncertain about we will go and stick a screwdriver into the void and see what we can see.

[12:30]

So at the moment, as far as we are aware, and we have done a lot of digging, we do not believe that there is any in the public estate in the Island. There may be some that has been used privately on private constructions, but we are not sure.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay. Minister, any comment before I close on that issue?

The Minister for Infrastructure:

No. Obviously we have had discussions about it and that is what has been said to me and I take that as read. I think one of the benefits of having people like Ronez and Granite Products using

local material is that the likelihood of it is probably quite slim. Nobody is being complacent; they are doing a very thorough job.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

No, that is fine. Panel, anything else that you ...

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

No, thank you.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I am sorry we have not got around to half the questions we wanted to ask you, Minister. You are probably greatly relieved. But we are now over time and I thank you for your attendance this morning.

The Minister for Infrastructure:

I am always relieved when the time comes to an end. Not as relieved as the teams are because they are never sure what I am going to say.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Right, and I believe we are about to switch off.

[12:31]