

4. Questions to Minister without Notice - The Minister for Planning and Environment:

4.1 The Deputy of St. Martin:

Will the Minister give an update on the Trinity infill application? Has the compensation issue been resolved and, if so, will the Minister inform Members of the cost of the compensation settlement?

Senator F.E. Cohen (The Minister for Planning and Environment):

I am afraid that is one of the areas I cannot go into. All I can say is that nothing has been agreed as yet.

4.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Would the Minister confirm, despite and in the light of his very well intended project on public art - would he confirm that the appointment of the Public Art Advisor is entirely coming from the levy which he will be placing upon certain planning applications, or whether indeed it will result in additional staffing costs for his department?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

The appointment of a Public Art Advisor will be funded from top-slicing the Centre for Art contributions. So, in other words, if the contribution is assessed at £10,000, £1,000 of that will be available to pay the Public Art Advisor. There is not an intention to be committed in the long-term to the Public Art Advisor, and it would be on a commission by commission basis.

4.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Notwithstanding the Minister's previous answers about the relatively low carbon impact of the Island because it uses nuclear electricity, what measures does the Minister have in place to set targets for further reducing our carbon imprint?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

If I remember correctly, we have plans to reduce our carbon footprint by a further 16 per cent. But very clearly, we need to do significantly more work as an Island and as States departments. We are proposing in that context to implement over a period of time a process of environmental audits of States departments. We will also be implementing a new system shortly in conjunction with the Minister for Economic Development to encourage local businesses to take their carbon footprints more seriously through an accreditation system called EcoActive Corporate. The further reduction will be achieved through a whole host of measures. There is not a magic measure. The magic measure was the move to the purchase of nuclear electricity. That has very significantly reduced our carbon outputs by about 34 per cent. There is not another magic one. The other 16 per cent will have to be made up out of small measures.

4.3.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

While the Minister is, as usual, wonderfully vague, would he care to suggest one, or the top 3, of these measures and say when this magical 16 per cent might be achieved by? When are you aiming at?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

Firstly, I hope that we will exceed 16 per cent. Secondly, in relation to specific measures, I have already given some. EcoActive Corporate will ensure that corporates are encouraged to reduce their carbon footprints, and if they wish to achieve accreditation they will have to demonstrate they are doing so. EcoActive is aimed at a personal level, and environmental audits are aimed at a government level. So, I think we are attacking all 3 areas of the economy at the same time. But I am afraid it is going to be softly, softly.

4.4 Deputy J.B. Fox:

I wonder if the Minister would advise us what the current state of play is in regard to the mineral strategy? Has it been resurrected? Is it going to be resurrected, if it is not? Is there any process at the moment that is being considered for importation of such minerals in relation to any future developments? Sir, we heard from the discussion yesterday on the ageing population, and also in relation to the major incidents, that if we lost both our harbour and our airport, what are alternatives, and would this involve requiring making new facilities?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

The mineral strategy is still under review. I am not aware that there have been any recent developments. The main issue as far as our strategy is concerned is obviously connected with areas such as the disposal of the waste that will be dug out of the waterfront and placed at La Collette. There are other significant areas which we are hoping to resolve, such as the disposal of hazardous waste, where we are very close to a solution. The mineral strategy in general is still under review.

4.5 The Deputy of St. Martin:

Given that the Island is happy to make cuts and savings by introducing G.S.T., how can the Minister justify appointing a Public Art Advisor?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

The Public Art Advisor, as I have already explained, will be paid for by top-slicing public art contributions. If you want to have high quality art you have to have a competent art advisor. I have been most insistent that whoever we do appoint demonstrates they have experience of commissioning art at an international level. So, I am afraid it is going to come out of the percentage for art contributions. It is a top slice, Sir, of those contributions. There is no additional burden on the public purse. I think it is an entirely appropriate way to deliver public art which, remember, is not just a matter of putting sculptures outside buildings. It incorporates a wide variety, from pavement art to light art, to materials that are incorporated in the buildings themselves, to the quality of design of buildings, to superb architecture, et cetera.

4.6 Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

What level of population would the Minister consider to be sustainable for the Island?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I am afraid I do not know the answer to the question. There is ongoing work by the population group. I believe that the States as a whole will have the opportunity of debating that very question. It will be for the States to answer the question and set the appropriate level. I do not believe it is for me to do so.

4.7 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Minister believe that coming forward with a consultation document on the Esplanade site, which has all the i's dotted and the t's crossed, and with a single design proposal, is appropriate consultation? For example, does he not consider that alternatives might be suggested, such as if we are going to dig a great big tunnel, could that not be for pedestrian access, rather than moving the entire road? Does he believe that this consultation will be any more meaningful than others because we have only got one option in front of us? While we might tinker with it, nobody can suggest alternatives. What alternatives were viewed?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

The primary consultation that led to what is now termed the Hopkins master plan, was a consultation process I implemented immediately on my appointment as Minister for Planning and Environment. That included extensive opportunities to engage with the public at various different levels, and I had many people who booked appointments to come and see me and tell

me what they thought was the best for the waterfront. We also had a seminar at the airport which, as best as I remember, over 200 people attended. That set some very key principles: that superb architecture was a requirement of the Island, that collectivity was a requirement of the Island. Those 2 principles led eventually to the Hopkins master plan. You cannot pick bits out of the canvas that has been presented and throw them up in the air and reassemble them in a different way. The whole principle relies upon lowering the road, building above the road, and the area above the road pays the cost of lowering the road and gives the Island a significant additional sum. That does not mean that we cannot make variations to the scheme, and that is the purpose of the consultation process. But the principles of the consultation process are not: "Do we want to tinker significantly with the principles behind it?" It is a genuine consultation process, but it is based on a canvas presented by Hopkins. Of course, it will be up to the States. If the States do not like it, they can throw it out.

4.8 Deputy J.A. Martin:

It is sort of a supplementary, really, although I was going to ask it before Deputy Southern. The Minister says on his appointment to the Ministry he immediately employed Hopkins to oversee the waterfront master plan. As we know, there are many other developments - indeed, I think all major developments - that Hopkins have to overview. Could the Minister give us the price that Hopkins have cost the States so far to date?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I cannot give the total price, but what I can do is give an indication. The master plan has cost, as best as I am aware at the moment, around £220,000, which I consider to be extremely good value, bearing in mind the enormous sums that the Island potentially can benefit from out of this scheme, should the States approve it. Of course, if the States do not approve it, the money is effectively wasted. As far as Hopkins' other work, it is really related to areas around the waterfront, such as the Weighbridge, and giving me some design advice on elements that were approved before my term. I think that is entirely appropriate. We need to have one exceptional architect taking a holistic view of all of the waterfront design. So, I am very happy with the appointment. Very happy with their involvement. I think they are doing a first-class job.

4.9 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

Would the Minister please update us in relation to environmental taxes?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

Environmental taxes are a key to our driving forward the benefits that Deputy Southern alluded to earlier. The money to encourage Islanders through grants through education, et cetera, will largely come through environmental taxes, but it was felt that one new tax at a time was probably the best way forward. I will be bringing back to the Council of Ministers, and hopefully after that to the States, in the first quarter of next year, proposals for environmental taxes. But to be very clear, they must be hypothecated, and that means that they must be separate and applied to environmental benefits. The first environmental benefits I would like to see are home insulation and environmental education.

4.10 Connétable G.F. Butcher of St. John:

Could the Minister advise me and the House as to whether there have been any further meetings regarding the proposed bypass at St. Johns?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

Most certainly there have not, and I am not anticipating any further meetings.

4.11 Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade:

While on a slightly different level from the Hopkins master plan, Members will have heard in the media this morning of considerable disquiet from berth-holders in the Elizabeth Marina regarding the fact that it is impossible to stop them unloading their cars and equipment subsequent to their fencing off an area that was previously used for this purpose and administered by W.E.B. and now has been lost. Can the Minister confirm or advise Members whether he will give consideration to dealing with this situation in conjunction with W.E.B. and Jersey Harbours, as there appears to be an element of shared responsibility in this matter?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

Until the Connétable's comments, I am afraid I was not aware of the problem. I will discuss the matter with him later, and assure him that I will do whatever I can to resolve any problems in relation to any development on the waterfront.

4.12 Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Further to the Hopkins plan, Sir, can the Minister give Members a start date for the sinking of the underpass? Much has been made about the master plan for the new Hopkins development down there, which the Minister says is going to be first class. When is the Minister going to turn his attention to alleged errors of the past on the waterfront?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I cannot tell you when the hole will start to be dug. That depends on this House. I expect to lodge a proposition to this House early in the New Year, and it will depend on this House when and if that is approved. As far as turning my attention to the errors of the past, I think I have done that by appointing one of the world's leading firms of architects, by setting in place principles that require local relevance, excellence of architecture and contextual relevance to be paramount in the design. I can assure the House that if I remain Minister for Planning and Environment that is precisely what I will deliver: first-class buildings of which the Island will be proud.

The Bailiff:

That concludes the second question period.