

## **9. The Minister for Transport and Technical Services - statement about the extreme weather conditions**

### **9.1 The Connétable of St. Brelade (The Minister for Transport and Technical Services):**

I beg Members' indulgence for just for a moment. The Island has experienced extreme weather and conditions over the last 10 days: snow, ice, floods and landslides. My staff at Transport and Technical Services have been working overnight and through all weathers to deal with the various problems that the weather has caused. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their hard work and ongoing commitment. **[Approbation]** The bad weather started the weekend before last. We received an advance severe weather warning and we were able to have staff and equipment ready to be deployed when the weather hit us. The weather then took another turn for the worse last Wednesday and that was a heavy snowfall which continued with varying degrees through to last Friday. However, the subsequent thaw has brought about problems with flooding and landslides and has caused considerable damage to some roads. Staff were up and out at 2.00 a.m. in the morning salting the main roads to keep them as clear as possible for when the rest of us had to go out later in the morning. They were also a vital link in reporting the state of the roads across the Island so that decisions could be made on whether bus services could be run and in turn, whether the Education Department decided to close schools. I think they did a fantastic job. **[Approbation]** This last weekend the snow melted as 2 inches of rain came down and we were hit with floods. The telemetry system which monitors our pumping stations registered 312 alarms. Various locations experienced very bad flooding. I visited the Tesson Mill area and witnessed the flooding that had taken place there and met those affected. I also went to Clos de l'Abri and St. Clement and understand the flooding at Rozel was extremely bad. In all we were aware of 21 incidents round the Island, mainly surface water issues. Our tankers and pumping station crew were out sorting out these problems. Our teams of workers were also supported by staff back at the office manning phones and radios and the duty emergency team which dealt with a variety of callouts, including several landslides. There is a high risk that more could happen over the next few days. The action of the freezing conditions has broken up the roads in certain areas and some have quite large potholes which have emerged virtually overnight in those particular areas. I appreciate the continued feedback from Members, as this helps us with the evaluation of the period's events. As is usual in these circumstances, T.T.S. will hold a debrief and review in due course, and there will be an ongoing programme of repair works. I thank the Members for their forbearance and I propose the adjournment. **[Laughter]**

#### **The Bailiff:**

That is a very valiant attempt to avoid any questions. **[Laughter]**

#### **9.1.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:**

While not wanting for a minute to underplay the lion's share of work done by the Minister's staff, would he not agree with me that the staff of some of the Parishes were heavily involved, as, indeed, were the Honorary Police around the Island? **[Approbation]**

#### **The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

Yes, I am pleased that the Connétable has brought that up. Indeed, they were. They have been heavily involved, certainly the Parish staff in all Parishes. I can vouch for my own as well as those particularly in St. Peter and St. Lawrence who I met on my rounds. I thank all volunteers on the Island for their ongoing contribution in these situations.

#### **9.1.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

Two questions. How much of the flooding was due to simple blocking of drains, that drain manholes were not cleaned. Secondly, we hear of the threat of flooding of Goose Green, but it

did not figure in any of the publicity that occurred. How is that situation holding up compared to others?

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

To answer the first part of the question: the manholes are regularly cleared because in an answer earlier on to the Connétable of St. Ouen, we are continually concerned about the flow from fields blocking drains and gullies, and this is an ongoing problem. Clearly the autumn produces many leaves and the staff continually clear the areas. In terms of Goose Green, clearly there was a flow of water through the systems and at this juncture I am not aware of any issues on the new development.

**9.1.3 Senator S.C. Ferguson:**

Not all the patched bits of road deteriorated into potholes. Does this mean there is a question as to the quality of patching of roads in the road maintenance programme?

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

The road will generally break up if its condition has deteriorated to the extent that frost is able to get into it and obviously expand when we get freezing conditions. New patches will not tend to break up but there have been one or 2 issues whereby new work has not been compatible with old work, I understand, and those are warranty issues which will be dealt with.

**9.1.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

The Minister has rightly praised the actions of his workers and recognised their valiant efforts, on which many of us absolutely depend. Will he subsequently defend the terms and conditions under which they work, for example, the work done in unsociable hours and with overtime?

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

My department is in the situation where, while one would like to do without overtime, and there is a general thrust against it, we have to rely on it in these particular situations and I cannot see any way of changing that. But I am pleased to say that, generally speaking, my staff are flexible and are moving to flexible working situations that will safeguard their jobs and provide good value for the public as and when required.

**9.1.5 Deputy A.E. Jeune:**

In the absence of my fellow St. Brelade Deputies, I would just like to ask the Minister because as he quite rightly says, unfortunately Route des Quennevais has come up with some really big holes. I appreciate the reasons why it has happened and it is very unfortunate. But could the Minister please give us an indication of how long it might be before they are able to be repaired?

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

The contractors are out plugging potholes as an interim measure and the proper patching will take place in the next week or so. So repairs are being dealt with as rapidly as possible.

**9.1.6 The Deputy of St. Martin:**

I am glad the Minister has made reference to the problems of flooding at Rozel, which the Minister says was very bad. I ought to mention: this is Rozel, St. Martin, just in case the Constable of Trinity is looking. But there were concerns expressed about a month ago because I expressed them to T.T.S. about the leaves and the drainage problems down there. Can I have an assurance from the Minister that this matter will be looked into because quite clearly ... I know it was a lot of rain but there was a lot of flooding as well. I am just wondering how much of that could have been prevented had a little bit more care and attention been given prior to the heavy rain over the weekend?

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

Principally the department follows a programme of emptying gullies on the T.T.S. roads and various Parish roads. Parishes have contracts either with T.T.S. or with private contractors to do their own. I think, in truth, in terms of the volume of water that was coming down, I suspect that emptying a day or so before would have made little difference.

**9.1.7 The Deputy of St. Mary:**

Following on from the previous one and that answer, does the Minister agree that there is a value for money issue with how much money you spend on cleaning drains and making sure they are free of leaves, especially at this time of year, and the possible damage and value of the damage and also of course the emotional damage caused by the flooding that might occur after the drains are not cleaned satisfactorily?

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

I must emphasise that the drains are cleaned satisfactorily and I think the important thing is that the continued adherence to the programme of regular maintenance remains because that is the only way one can do it. One uses experience of the past to decide how regular that needs to be.

**9.1.8 Connétable J.M. Refault of St. Peter:**

Would the Minister comment on the T.T.S. Department's view of not using colas as a bonding agent between patches of new and old asphalt on safety grounds whereas the bonding agent stops the water getting in, in these freezing conditions, and causing the potholes, which, in themselves, become another safety hazard?

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

The suggestion of the Connétable that the department do not recommend using this compound on the seams is a fallacy and we have no issue with it whatsoever.

**9.1.9 The Deputy of Trinity:**

Would the Minister agree that, regarding Rozel, that it was the sheer volume of water that has caused the problem? I know the Fire Service were there for at least over 12 to 14 hours and that they were concerned they did clear out the drains, but it was the sheer volume of water that was coming down the valley that was the problem. I would like to praise the Fire Service because they did an excellent job. [Approbation]

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

Likewise I would like to endorse that. The presence of the Fire Service certainly at Tesson Mill and no doubt other areas was certainly appreciated by those living in those particular affected areas.

**The Bailiff:**

Very well. No other questions? Then that concludes questions.