

3.10 Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade of the Minister for the Environment regarding the Islands network of Marine Protected Areas (OQ.25/2026):

Further to the extension of the Island's network of Marine Protected Areas, as set out in the Marine Spatial Plan, and following the lodging of P.18/2026, will the Minister explain the reasons for the phasing of the implementation of the M.P.A. (Marine Protected Areas) network and any changes to the boundaries?

Deputy S.G. Luce of Grouville and St. Martin (The Minister for the Environment):

Over the course of December and January recently, the Government of Jersey Marine Resources Team held meetings with fishermen and fishing committees, both in Jersey, Normandy and Brittany. Those organisations were asked to share verbally or submit in writing their concerns and recommendations relating to the latest Marine Protected Area proposals. Recommendations to modify the M.P.A.s were received in writing from the French and on paper, from the Jersey Mobile Gear Working Group. I gave consideration to these proposals and, based on these submissions and economic information that was reported to me in December, I proposed the various changes to the M.P.A.s. That is a small change; the north-west of the Minquiers permanently removed from protection, 0.27 per cent of the total territorial water; a very small change north of Grosnez, 0.06 per cent of our territorial water to be removed from protection; and the phasing of an area to the south-east corner, equivalent to 0.86 per cent of our territorial water, which will come back into protection in 2030.

3.10.1 Deputy J. Renouf:

My understanding was that there were 3 areas that were phased. I wonder whether the Minister could publish a map which make these clear, because it is not in the proposition. But these areas that have been put down for phased protection, the department's own surveys have confirmed that these are sensitive habitat-rich areas that need protection. Therefore, how is the Minister going to ensure that now he has delayed protection until 2030 in those areas they do not just get dredged to destruction over the next 4 years, thereby negating the whole point of protection?

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Can I first clear up the issue over the 3 phased areas? The Deputy is quite correct, there are 3 phased areas. The first 2 were proposed for phasing some time ago when I first came to office and this last phased area to the south-east of the Island is one I proposed recently. But those 3 areas all come into full protection in 2030. The final lines for protection for Marine Protected Areas has been a very difficult project to come to fruition. I have had to balance environmental protection. I have had to balance the future of the fishing fleets, both here and locally and in France. While we started by looking at the amount of time various boats spent in those areas, recently we have also commissioned some economic work to show the value to some boats of being able to fish in these particular areas of our waters. I have had to take that into account as well. The case for immediate cessation of fishing in all these areas was made quite strongly by the French and by the local fleets. I had to perform a balancing act where they asked me for areas to be removed from protection, some of which I had granted, some of which I have not. I accept that I will be criticised by the environmentalists who think I should have done more. But I also will be criticised by the fishermen who think I should have done more as well. I hope that I have reached a good balance here, one that will be accepted by both sides, while not being particularly happy. But I think it is important, vital, as we move towards having a fishery in our territorial waters which is sustainable. But we have to make sure that we have fishing boats that are still profitable and still in business when we get to that point.

3.10.2 Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

Could the Minister explain the criteria he used to determine which areas of seabed would be protected, given that research commissioned at his request identified high density of maerl in certain areas, specifically in the south-east corner, that he is proposing to be left open to dredging until 2030?

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I looked at lots of data when coming to this conclusion. One of the pieces of data we looked at was not only the amount of financial contribution to a French fishing business but, more importantly, the percentage of time that fishing boats spent in particular areas. I felt right at the outset we had decided to phase some areas where the case was made for certain boats that spend over 20 per cent of their time in a particular area. We then had

to be consistent and apply that to other vessels. I then had to balance that against the research work that I commissioned when I became Minister, the results of which showed that certainly some areas around our coast were very high in maerl. What I have done, I hope, but I certainly am confident that in certain areas, there is an area outside the 3-mile limit close to our territorial limit where the maerl is very good and I have said that is going to remain protected. There is a certain area closer to Jersey shore where there was less maerl found, less than 5 per cent viable, and I have allowed those areas to be continued to fish until 2030 when they will come into full protection. It is a balancing act where boats fish a lot, where they make a lot of money and their business would be threatened if they were removed immediately. I have allowed some phasing but only in areas where the levels of maerl have been reduced, to other areas where I have allowed continuation of full protection.

3.10.3 Deputy J. Renouf:

I understand that there is a balancing act needed but I do not think the Minister answered my supplementary question earlier, which is that the effect of this, if it will be to ensure that dredging is intensified to make maximum use of that 4-year window, thereby potentially rendering the areas almost worthless in terms of protection, does he consider that the risk of this happening is worth what it seems to be, a political negotiation with France to keep the French happy?

Deputy S.G. Luce:

It has always been my intention to try to work with the local fishermen and work with the French fishermen in Normandy and Brittany, to work together to come to an agreement. That was never going to be an easy thing to do and I accept the criticism that by closing some areas and not others. Those areas which will remain to be dredged for the next 4 years may well get exploited more greatly than they are currently. It is a balancing act. I would say to the Deputy, I cannot keep everybody happy. I cannot keep anybody happy in this particular regard. But what I can do is say to the Deputy that we have in Jersey Marine Protected Areas which are properly protected by law, even though they are unlike other jurisdictions. We are moving from 6 per cent to 21.7 per cent on 1st September and then adding a few more per cent in 2030. We have done great things protecting our territorial waters. We are doing great things protecting our territorial waters. We will do better things in the future to protect both the fishing fleet and the marine environment.