



Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny

Panel

Quarterly Public Hearing

Witness: The Minister for the Environment

Wednesday, 8th March 2023

Panel:

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

Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade

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

Witnesses:

Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade - The Minister for the Environment

Deputy H. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity - Assistant Minister for the Environment

Mr. W. Peggie - Group Director, Natural Environment

Mr. A. Coates - Principal Policy Planner

[11:00]

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

Good morning, Minister, team, welcome to our quarterly hearing. It comes around it seems like more than once a quarter but, anyway, here we are again. Before we kick off with our questions, I am just going to do the usual routine, which is to introduce ourselves. My name is Deputy Steve Luce, I am Chair of the Environment Scrutiny Panel. With me today ...

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

Deputy Mary Le Hegarat, District North St. Helier.

Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade:

Constable Mike Jackson, panel member.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Minister, your side of the table.

The Minister for the Environment:

Deputy Jonathan Renouf, Minister for the Environment.

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

Deputy Hilary Jeune, Assistant Minister for the Environment.

Group Director, Natural Environment:

I am Willie Peggie, Director for the Natural Environment.

Principal Planning Policy Officer:

I am Alistair Coates, Principal Planning Policy Officer with Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning, I think.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Thank you very much for that. Apologies from Deputy Rob Ward, our Vice-Chair, who is in London today on some parliamentary duties at Portcullis House. Minister, we will fire off straight away with some questions on the Bridging Island Plan and Deputy Le Hegarat is going to lead off with this.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Minister, in the Bridging Island Plan proposal 24 stated the Minister for the Environment will develop and issue supplementary planning guidance for the operation of this policy in order that it might take effect from January 2023. Can you elaborate further on what exactly the supplementary planning guidance will include.

The Minister for the Environment:

Which one does that refer to? You have missed out the section in which that is sitting.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Okay, it is proposal 24, affordable housing.

The Minister for the Environment:

Okay, affordable housing, yes. So the supplementary planning guidance has been a stream of work that we have been working on ever since I became Minister. We have sequenced it so the sequence has been, first of all, minimum density standards. We have just brought out the draft supplementary planning guidance on minimum space standards and on carparking standards. The next one in line is the planning briefs and the aim is to have those out this month. So the planning briefs for the rezoned housing sites will come this month. Later than I would have liked but we were slightly delayed for various reasons, one of which was a States debate, which called in or attempted to call in some of those guidance ... some of the earlier guidance, but all of those pieces of guidance were necessary before we could get to the housing briefs. The housing briefs can only be delivered once we have put in place what the space standards are, the density standards and the parking standards. No developer is going to be able to come up with a plan until that is in place. So later than we would like but this month.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Okay, thank you. We are hearing that the Island does not have sufficient drainage capacity for a number of new housing developments across several areas of the Island. What conversations have you had with the Minister for Infrastructure and the department to ensure that Jersey's infrastructure is able to cope with the increase in use and the new connections to the sewage network, given the plan for these new builds.

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, it is a serious issue and there have been a lot of conversations. It is an intensive area of government involvement at the moment, government discussion at the moment. There is an historic backlog of under investment in sewage infrastructure, particularly taking into account the increases in population that we have seen. There are significant bottlenecks in the sewage system which have been identified, which are known about and which we have put together plans to try and address, but the funding for that is a challenge. We are working on trying to find ways to fund that programme of work in a way that will expedite those affordable housing site developments. There are also other things we can look at, other methods we can look at for dealing with that, if it becomes critical, which would involve not connecting up to the main sewage for a period of time or not at all but there is no question that the long-term solution to this is the investment that we need in the sewage system.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

In relation to that question then, given that this is such an issue and we are obviously aware of it as well, how concerned are you about being able to deliver the target number of homes set out in the Bridging Island Plan?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, it is a concern. It is a concern and I think we absolutely have to address that sewage constraint one way or another. There are different ways of doing it and I think we have been ... obviously the best solution is to improve the infrastructure so that we can get the mains ... get all those sites ... get enough capacity in the system so all those sites can be developed and attached to the mains. But there are various different ways of doing that, there are ways that could be more of a stopgap solution than a permanent solution and we may have to look at those. As I say, if it becomes critical then we will have to look at other methods of delivering sewage facilities to some of those sites. We cannot invest in everything at once. There has to be a sequence of that investment.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Does it not mean, though, Minister, and we may be talking here about a housing estate of, say, 40 or 50 homes, but there is no difference surely between 10 individuals applying to connect their personal property on to the mains, and we know of certain areas of the Island that has already been refused? I do not quite know how to describe the situation but you have said there a significant bottleneck and under investment, yes, but it is critical. We need to do something now. We need to do something yesterday really. We cannot surely ask individuals with their homes who want to connect to go on to tight tanks or start using soakaways. The plans that we have in place, especially the Environmental Plan, Island Plan, et cetera, say main drains is the number one way of connecting homes to the sewage system. Do we envisage some changes to that guidance?

The Minister for the Environment:

As I say, it is an intensive area of discussion, what the best way through that is. The Infrastructure Minister will ultimately be the person who makes decisions in that area but he and I talk, and our officers talk, a lot about this because it is such an area of worry. It is not something I anticipated when I took this role on, that that would be such a significant bottleneck and I do think we need to come up with solutions. I cannot tell you right now this is the solution. I think it is going to be a range of things. I do not think there will be one solution where we say, in every case, this is what we are going to do.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

It seems to me in the solutions there is the solution whereby the public put in more infrastructure. That can be funded privately or by the public. If it is funded privately that then pushes up the cost of homes to perhaps outside the affordability range, would you agree? Secondly, if the public were to do it then it becomes a burden on taxation. I suppose the question is, do you see there being a need for taxation to rise to cover this?

The Minister for the Environment:

I do not know about taxation to rise, I think that what we have is a sum of money is needed and its tens of millions a year to make these investments and it has to come from somewhere. It can come from reallocation within existing budgets, it can come from reserves, it can come from new taxes or it can come from private contributions. In all likelihood it will be a mix, depending on the site and depending on the scale of investment that is needed. In crude terms, what we need is to be able to smooth out the flow of sewage so ... the bottlenecks only occur at peak times, most of the time the sewage system can handle the demands that are placed on it so what we need is storage facilities that can hold the sewage in a peak moment and release it into the system at a time when the system has the capacity in it. It is about holding tanks basically and locating where they go and putting them in there. So it is not a massively complex thing to do, I think we know what that solution is but it needs funding.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Would you say the situation, Minister, is at a point where we have to do this now and we need to spend the money and worry about where the money comes from afterwards? I know this is sort of outside of your area ... it is not an environment question, it is more a question for the Minister for Treasury and Resources, but it seems to us - and we are yet to do the work - on a very rough looking at the situation that this work needs to be done and we need to worry about how we pay for it afterwards because it is so important to get this work done now.

The Minister for the Environment:

I do not think the Minister for Treasury and Resources would thank me for saying: "Just go and spend the money and worry about it afterwards." It is fair to say my view expressed in government is that we need to fund this work.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Another question. Do you believe that there is any of those developments within the Bridging Island Plan that could be delivered without that problem being sorted.

The Minister for the Environment:

I have not looked at every single one. I know the one I have looked at most closely is the one around St. Peter and I know that there are difficulties there.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Yes, they started some sort of work up there because there seems to be pipes and fields dug up.

The Minister for the Environment:

I have not seen ... there has been no planning application. So if it is work it would be at the very early preparatory stage.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

All right, we will move on a little bit from drains. Minister, given the recent news regarding construction firm Camerons going into administration, what are your views on the stability and capacity of the construction sector at the moment? Do you have any concerns that this will impact negatively on development targets set out in the Bridging Island Plan?

The Minister for the Environment:

Obviously it is a blow when a traditional Island company that has been around for a long while is lost in this way. They have explained publicly reasons for that and we have to assume that those pressures are affecting the whole industry. I must say that in general there is a lot of building going on in Jersey and it is hard for me to believe that given the demand for building in the Island that the construction sector as a whole is going to struggle with profitability, which is what ultimately drives a business out of business. Most of the complaints we hear are more to do with capacity constraints and pricing pressures rather than businesses threatened with going under because of cash flow issues.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I will just come back and say, Minister, I know again it is outside of your remit and I get what you are saying about profit, and there is a huge demand out there that will have to be met somehow but a large number of smaller Jersey businesses have been affected by Camerons going into administration. That is a real concern for us. I know we are not the Economic Scrutiny Panel but I guess it must be a concern for you and may well be that another large developer wants to take over but there is a large number of small Jersey businesses who could potentially have their businesses put at risk by Camerons folding.

The Minister for the Environment:

You are right, it is not directly my brief. My understanding is that the work that Camerons was contracted to do, certainly the big development, has been picked up largely. I am not aware of the extent to which that is the case across their whole portfolio, so I cannot answer that directly.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Final question in this section. Moving forward could you outline your plans for moving ahead with the next 10 year Island Plan or what alternative options you are going to consider?

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, that is a good question. That is also a subject of discussion at the moment. My view, as I expressed right from the beginning when I took this role on, was that I felt that the Bridging Island Plan had more life in it than 2025 and I still hold to that view. The question of how we approach the next stage, how we extend it, if we extend it, how we do so is a complex one for quite a few reasons. If I can pick on one in particular, I am interested in exploring the extent to which the Island Plan as it currently exists is the ... and the process for producing it, so the process and the output are the right ones for the Island. So every Island Plan we do we now have a statutory process we go through, it takes about 2 years, and it produces an Island Plan, and the Island Plan generally gets bigger. I think that is correct, is it not?

Principal Planning Policy Officer:

Unfortunately, yes.

The Minister for the Environment:

So the Island Plan gets bigger each time and more complex. I would like to do a piece of work, which I would very much want to involve Scrutiny in that, to understand whether it is the right ... the process that we have in place and the thing that we produce out of that process is right for the Island. It might well be but it seems to me this is a moment where we would just ask that question. That is one reason why I think it is a complex question.

[11:15]

The other thing is that there are an awful lot of unfinished pieces of business in the Bridging Island Plan and pieces of work coming forward that you would want to inform the next Island Plan. For example, we have the population data forecasts coming out at the end of this year and the predictions of housing demand that will come out of that. So we would want those pieces of information in place before we got down to serious work on a new Island Plan. For those reasons it feels to me like it is a complicated question, it is one that I hope will become part of a dialogue between us. I do not have a fixed view on it but I do think it is unlikely that we will have the time to do the things that need to be done within this term of government and therefore I still hold to the view that it is most likely that we will be doing the preparatory work in this term of government but doing the next Island Plan at the beginning of the next one.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

What is the legal situation with that, Minister, because obviously the Island Plan is a legal document and has responsibilities and regulation within and it is not possible for you to just say: "We are going to extend this 4 year plan for 10 years"? What would you need to do in order to extend it further than the life that it has already been given?

The Minister for the Environment:

I seem to remember the last one was extended by a year, an extra year?

Principal Planning Policy Officer:

Yes, and in terms of this Island Plan if it was to be extended further then we would have to amend the relevant piece of law or one other option is to basically reissue the Island Plan as it is. This is the new Island Plan, we could amend various pieces if we found policies that would work but the Island Plan could be relaunched again after its term as a new Island Plan and then that fits in with the 10 year requirement of law.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Do you think an Island Plan ought to be issued before an election or just after?

The Minister for the Environment:

My primary thinking about this is not trying to time it in terms of electoral cycles. It is really about the work that needs to be done before a new Island Plan can reasonably add something compared to the existing one. We have an existing Island Plan. It has only been in place for less than a year. It is still shaking down, the supplementary planning guidance still has a long way to go. There is a lot of other policy development pieces that were requested in that and we are going to probably end up talking about some of them. So it does not seem to me to make sense to start work on a new Island Plan when we know that work still has to be done. It is going to have to be done whether you fit it in with this Island Plan or the next one. It just seems to me like let us understand the pipeline of work that needs to be done to make a new plan have sense, to be worthwhile. There is no point in moving on from an Island Plan if it is still doing the job and we still have work to do within it.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

It is just that a lot of planning issues tend to be picked up at election times because they are contentious, and my question really was: is there any benefit to have the fresher view on an Island Plan, shall we say just after an election, rather than shackling a new Assembly with the views of an old Assembly?

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, I think that is a valid argument. The last one, of course, was one of the last acts of the last Assembly. I do not detect a huge credibility problem with the Island Plan. I do not think people are saying: "That was the last lot." An Island Plan has to have greater stability and weight to it than a policy proposition about ... I cannot think of something off the top of my head but just some simple

policy that you might have one year and then change the next year. An Island Plan has to feel like something that people can plan on. For example, I know that some developers are already worried that with the longevity of the Island Plan as it is now running out, will decisions they make now be undermined by the fact that a new Island Plan might be in place by the time they go to an application stage. I do think that the Island Plan is an anchor for the Island. It needs to feel like it is a solid thing that people can feel they can navigate by, mixing my metaphors.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Given the complexities you have just described, and I am not saying I disagree with them, in hindsight we know we had a 4 year plan for a reason but was it a mistake to go for a 4 year plan knowing what you have just said about the difficulties in looking a long way ahead?

The Minister for the Environment:

It is very difficult, is it not, to look back like that because the reason for the Bridging Island Plan was COVID and the feeling that the world was so uncertain that if we committed beyond that period then we might have a hostage to fortune. But the Bridging Island Plan turned into a very solid piece of work and very exhaustive piece of work, and a very thorough debate in the States. It did not turn out feeling ... the word "bridging" implies that it is a short-term thing getting you to somewhere better. I think it has turned into a ... it is a solid piece of work, it builds in a very coherent way on policies that have gone before. It does not feel like it is a sudden departure or anything, it feels logical and makes sense.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

It certainly feels, from this side of the table I think, a bit like we are doing the same amount of work that we would do with a supplementary planning guidance, all the other policy work we are doing. There does not seem to be much different between doing that for a 10 year plan or doing it for a 4 year plan. It is unfortunate in many ways it is a 4 year plan. But notwithstanding all that, Minister, there must be a point in time, I guess some time in 2024 where a decision will have to be made because if we decide that this 4 year plan is that and no more there is a considerable amount of work to do before 2026. Do you have a date in mind?

The Minister for the Environment:

I would say before 2024, I would say this year and not the end of this year.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

So there will be a States debate or there will be something ...

The Minister for the Environment:

I will discuss with you and with officers, and I hope it becomes a dialogue about this. It is not me just sitting there saying this is what we are going to do. No, I think this year we have to resolve what we are aiming at.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay, we are going to move on and move to climate change if that is all right, Deputy. I know it is a long time ago, Minister, but in 2015 there was published a *Future-proofing Jersey: Building Resilience for the 21st Century* that came out from the Town and Country Planning Association. We just want to know a little bit more about Jersey's plans for climate change adaptation. Do we have a plan published for that?

The Minister for the Environment:

I am going to let Hilary deal with this in the first instance, if that is okay. Sorry, Deputy Jeune, I beg your pardon.

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

So there is not an overall adaptation plan, a national adaptation plan, but they have ... from that report there has been a number of specific focuses on different adaptation that specifically is of worry for Jersey. For example, the Shoreline Management Plan that has been done since 2001 where it focused on flooding, for example, coastal flooding because of the potential of sea level rises. That is looking at within the next 100 years and seeing where are the weaker points within the coastal flooding. There is that plan and that is coming under the Minister for Infrastructure and it is very much within that adaptation plan. Another one would be flood management plan within the Island, so inland, and that sits within the Bridging Island Plan and I think a number of adaptation plans from a specific area is within the Bridging Island Plan and is focused on that. We also have, for example, adapting houses as well. So looking at the construction of houses. There is also changes and guidance within the Bridging Island Plan that looks at that adaptation as well. No, there is not a national adaptation plan as some countries have put forward but very much risk was seen on different areas and that has been put within the Bridging Island Plan or specifically in different plans. We will talk about the water strategy later but, of course, the water strategy will, of course, be very much an adaptation plan as well.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Do you see a need in the immediate short term to change planning guidance for areas like Grand Vaux, and we have spoken to the Minister for Infrastructure about this, where applications come forward and the Planning Department say: "No, we want houses in this particular area built higher out of the ground so that we know that if flooding takes place the residents are not affected"?

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

I know within the Bridging Island Plan there is already a focus on flooding. I have now seen a map where it is very specific where it shows high risk areas. In those high risk areas whenever a planning application is put forward the developer would need to put a flood mitigation plan in place as well, which would, I assume, include those kind of things, like how would you adapt the house according to make sure it does not be impacted by flooding. Yes, there is very much ... again, the Bridging Island Plan does take a lot of this into consideration.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Given the events at Grand Vaux that we are well aware of and I think concerned about, and in light media reports that we may get heavy rain and the department is fully prepared, what will make you lose sleep at night at the moment if we get a massive downpour? Where would your preliminary concerns be?

The Minister for the Environment:

Grand Vaux is always going to be a problem. It is 20 per cent of the catchment, I think, for the Island and it funnels into a small area. We have already put in place quite a few measures but we are dealing with a situation where the climate is changing and what were one in 100 events might become more frequent. The nature of this Island is that we get very specific localised events. You know, that flood was caused because a low pressure system sat over Les Platons for a long period of time, 24 hours virtually. If it had been even a few miles to the side it might have been a different outcome. We have a highly localised problem and that hit that weakness, that spot, particularly badly. Yes, I do still worry about our resilience to flooding. It is not just Grand Vaux, we have other valleys that channel into areas where there is significant housing and where in the past housing has not been built with the kind of sensitivity that the Island Plan does now, as Deputy Jeune says, direct very clearly. There are some pretty decent policies in there. The only real issue is going to be to make sure that they are followed, that they are actually applied when the application stages come through, because there is a clear set of instructions about what to do if you are in a flood zone in terms of tailoring your application accordingly. In terms of going forward, we can do a good job, I think. In terms of the legacy issues we have to deal with, there is a lot of work to do to make sure that we have optimised our systems in terms of upstream management, in terms of the catchment management and so on to reduce the chance of another flood.

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

Just again where I am losing sleep is ... of course at the moment in the forefront of our minds is the flooding but in the summer and going into early autumn we had a drought. That for me also is ... maybe it is more about the extremes of the weather. As an Island, are we prepared for that? As I said, we have these plans in place and I think that is also important to remind us of the moment

where we had a long period of drought and we had to use the desalination plant for a long time, which of course from an energy perspective that is utilising a lot of energy but also from a cost perspective because it costs a lot of money to run. Again, we will come back to the water strategy later but that all pins on those extreme events.

The Minister for the Environment:

You probably remember the high tides a couple of weeks ago. I cycled along St. Aubin's Bay when it was high tide, it is like a bath about to overflow. We had an absolutely calm day. If we had had a southerly gale blowing in that ... that worries me. That is why that strategy for resilience in terms of shoreline management and so on is so important.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Just to get back to this, we have mentioned heatwaves, droughts, rainfall leading to flooding, are you confident we are going to have an adaptation plan to deal with those, not necessarily tidal issues but those others. In the next 12 months are we going to be more resilient?

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

I think so. As we have said, the Bridging Island Plan starts to come into effect and we start having standards followed then I think we will start being able to see that resilience being built, especially in the building standards. It is very important that buildings are adapted to all those things, whether it is flooding or it is water shortage. How do we make sure that we can reduce consumption of water within buildings to make sure that is reduced but also maybe water storage as well now? How homes can be collecting water, for example. I think when we start looking at the Bridging Island Plan and that process, that piece of work that the Minister was talking about, once they start to embed through the Island I think we will start seeing resilience building.

[11:30]

I think because also we have, within less than a year, seen these extremes in weather, it is very much at the forefront of our minds for everybody. We are starting to see climate change hitting Jersey and this, of course, will mean we need to see the resilience and that we have that drive to ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I mean 2023, just to take a very short period of time, has been exceptional. In January, it rained every day, huge problems with that. In February, no rain at all and almost unheard of in February. I just want to finish on this little subject before we move on. We spoke about drains and the fact that the bigger system is at critical levels. We are going to look for attenuation to try to resolve that. In the similar sort of way when it comes to flooding, sustainable urban drainage schemes are a big

thing in the U.K. (United Kingdom) at the moment. We do not seem to have as much emphasis here in Jersey. Every development could have a way of attenuating water that stores it on site before it releases it slowly into the main system potentially again at a rate that Bellozanne can cope or the drains can cope. Do we think that we should have some sort of S.U.D.S. (Sustainable Urban Drainage System) legislation so that every application that comes to planning, regardless of whether it is a small application or a 200-unit application, has sustainable urban drainage as a prerequisite?

The Minister for the Environment:

Good question. You are talking about foul water or runoff?

Deputy S.G. Luce:

No, I am talking about rainwater, runoff water.

The Minister for the Environment:

Rainwater runoff, yes.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I was looking at schemes recently where water running down roads instead of going into a drain goes into a number of small tanks along the side of the road which you grow plants and trees in and that water is filtered and let out more slowly into the system.

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, part of the water strategy is unquestionably going to be to explore how we better use the rain and the water that we have and that is going to have to be a very holistic piece of work. I think people traditionally see water strategy in terms of how many reservoirs we need and that kind of thing and I think the water strategy is now a much more complex piece of work.

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

It is also in the Bridging Island Plan. There is a specific about the surface water drainage so I think it is policy ...

Principal Policy Planner:

Yes, I will just pick up on that point, Assistant Minister. We have policy WER6 that requires that, in any circumstance where there is a building or an extension or any other form of development proposed where we think that building or works is going to affect any surface water flows, there is a requirement that they have to come to us with a S.U.D.S. system in play. So there is a very strong hook in the Bridging Island Plan that any developer ... and this relates back to the kind of flood risk and mitigation issues that the Assistant Minister picked up on earlier. There is a requirement that

S.U.D.S. is incorporated into any scheme that has the potential to affect surface water drainage from a site.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

This is a political question so I am going to direct it to the Minister. Do you think that is happening, though, because there are 2 Members on this side sit on the Planning Committee and I cannot say we are particularly aware of S.U.D.S. being a prerequisite?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, I think we can certainly help with a note to officers to make sure that it is. There are lots of things I think in the Bridging Island Plan that are yet to fully filter into the process and if you are saying that has not been the case in terms of applications you are seeing, I would say that is a worry.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I am sure you do not need to answer the question but I would imagine that you are both committed to looking at sustainable urban drainage and making sure that it is absolutely incorporated in the planning system.

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes.

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

Absolutely.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

We are going to move on quickly because we are already one-third of the way through and we have not certainly done a third of our questions. Renewable energy, Minister. We have recently had one meeting with Jersey Electricity. We did not get through everything we wanted to talk about. We are going to meet them again but we have certainly been asking them about offshore utility scale renewable energy and can you just elaborate where you feel you are with that and how quickly you would like to move?

The Minister for the Environment:

Shall I take it or will you?

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

We are working together on this so, I suppose, Minister, you can start.

The Minister for the Environment:

So it is a very, very strong area of focus. My overall view about this is that this is a potential game changer for Jersey. There is a huge potential here for us to do something different that changes perceptions of Jersey, changes our economy and all sorts of opportunities open up if we become a producer and potentially exporter of renewable electricity at utility scale. However, it is an incredibly complex process which has enormous risks in it if we do not get it right but, at a personal level, I get really excited about the potential for Jersey in offshore wind. Deputy Jeune is leading this in terms of the political level and you might want to say a few more words about it from your perspective.

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

Yes, so we have a Future Energy Ministerial Working Group that has come together with the different Ministers who this kind of big infrastructure project would touch upon and, within that, we have a stream of work on exploring this area and we are pulling in experts to help us set the framework for which we can then move forward into the next phase. So we are working hard and we have weekly meetings on this to build not only our expertise in this area but also officers and also, as I say, the wider area where we want to go. The Marine Spatial Plan is one of the first key areas that the Minister has launched and last week, we had a number of workshops and one was specifically on energy and infrastructure where we had a number of key stakeholders looking at maps and talking about what this could look like. It was a very positive engagement to start with so there are a number of steps that we were taking so we are, hopefully, working at pace because it is such a big project. It is something that we also need to go out to the public with as well of course so it is something that we need to make sure that we are comfortable with to start those bigger consultations.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Any sort of timescale on that work and I think we agree from this side of the table that working at pace absolutely has to happen so how long do you think before we start to see some concrete proposals? Have you decided, for example, where you are going to go? I presume it is going to be wind but we enjoy one of the largest ranges of tides in the world. Are we dismissing tidal energy? I know it is not come on as quickly as we had all hoped.

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

Yes, and I think that there was a study that looked at the different energy mixes from a renewable perspective and so it was really looked at and we saw that wind, at the moment, was the most viable for now in this particular moment. So, tidal, you have both the lagoon which of course is a potential bridge across St. Aubin's Bay which has a lot of concerns from a perspective of revenue generation for the cost that it would be to build and the environmental impact of course potentially could be huge. Then from a wave perspective, the energy from that will not be enough to help power the whole of the Island with the energy that we need and of course that is potentially only going up. So

for now, with the technology of tidal and looking at the cost benefits, we see that wind probably would be the most economic for us.

The Minister for the Environment:

We are in a sweet spot basically where demand is very high and we know that there is an under supply and we could tap into that. We could also miss the boat in that there is a lot of money going to flow into this sector in the next 10 years and if we do not act reasonably quickly, we could miss the boat. So the need to act at pace is not just us saying that we want to act at pace. It is an economic opportunity which I think if we are going to seize, we have to seize it.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Do you see that being funded from within the Island or would we need outside investment?

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

We are discussing at the moment the different kinds of models that that could look like so we do not have anything definitive at the moment. That is why we want to try to lay as much ground work as possible to then be able to go out to consultation and come to you with more of a plan, to have that understanding and then be able to explore what those different funding models could look like and which is the most beneficial for the Island both from an economic perspective and also for consumers of energy as well.

The Minister for the Environment:

I think it is also fair to say that we do not envisage building a wind farm out of government revenue. So the questions on that in terms of government revenue are about how much you prime the process, how much preparation you do before the operator comes in or before you have a bidding situation or whatever, how much do we de-risk the project for the potential operator out of taxpayer money? Obviously, the more you de-risk, the more benefit you can potentially gain because you get a reward for that investment but if you do not do the de-risking, you put a risk on to the operator and, therefore, you maybe get less benefit back because they need compensation for taking that risk. So there are a lot of complex questions like that but we are working quickly with the hope that we can bring something pretty quickly. I am very reluctant to put a timeframe on that because it is not just us as a ministerial team working on this. It is a cross-government piece of work and I would not want to put anybody in a hot spot in a way but as quickly as possible.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Is there much input from the Jersey Electricity Company obviously as the sole producers or suppliers of electricity in the Island and do you have a close relationship with them towards coming up with a result?

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

Yes, we are talking to them regularly on a number of issues. We also have officer working groups with them on different elements of the carbon neutral road map as well so we do work closely with them and we are building and built this relationship that means that, at different levels, we are in regular conversations with them. I think that has really helped to build that kind of trust and that confidence in understanding what the Island needs from an energy mix.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Does the Jersey Electricity Company have to be involved in this or was it something that would potentially be one of a number of people you might go to?

The Minister for the Environment:

Almost any combination you can imagine at this stage. Clearly, they have to be involved. There is no doubt about that. In the end, at the very least, they are going to have to buy electricity so there is no way of not having Jersey Electricity involved. They are our company so, obviously, we are exploring the options that could ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

So we will miss out the timescale and just assume that things are moving ahead as quickly as they possibly can.

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

We will come to you on ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Yes, just a comment I would make is that - and Willie will know about this - some years ago, Jersey did a lot of work with the French before they put their wind farm in when they were doing the research work. Certainly one of the subjects we discussed at great length was fishermen because, obviously, the French wind farm will push more French fishermen into Jersey's territorial waters. It will have a knock-on effect with Jersey's fishermen. I know it is early days and it will be considered in the future but can you give us an assurance, Minister, that our fishermen's concerns will be taken into consideration because it is a big area of seabed that will be affected and they will be pushed out during that time?

The Minister for the Environment:

It is a big area but one of the good things about it is - and there is always a glass half full and glass half empty thing - we missed the boat a few years but the advantage is we have a more investable

proposition now and one of the key things about that is that the turbines are bigger. Now there are some downsides to that but one of the upsides is you need fewer of them and that, I think, is a significant factor in terms of the potential for influencing not just fishermen but we have to look at navigation routes for commercial shipping. There are lots of those sorts of considerations that have to be taken into account as well. We had the first meeting last week with them in terms of the Marine Spatial Plan and I am completely committed to involving them in that negotiation and discussion around that.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

We are going to come back on to the Marine Spatial Plan later on if we can find some time. I just want to move on quickly to transition fuels and we understand from your delivery plan you are going to develop a policy position on it. So when do you anticipate providing further details on transition fuels?

The Minister for the Environment:

When do we anticipate? I do not think we have a date in the diary at the moment.

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

I think we do not have a date because when we looked at this and we had an energy review, we reviewed it in December, the prices were still fluctuating that much that it means that it was difficult to pinpoint where a good policy would be on this to support transition fuels. So at the moment, we are still discussing what that could look like.

[11:45]

The Minister for the Environment:

We do not want to throw money away, basically. So whatever we do on bio fuels, or transition fuels rather, needs to feel like it is something that is going to work consistently and not just because this year we can throw a bit of money at it and then wonder what is going to happen the year after. It needs to feel more coherent than that.

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

We are still in this energy crisis and, as I said, the fluctuating prices mean we still are in this market difficulty. So I think we are reviewing it constantly and we are still looking at this to make sure that it is in the right place and, as it stabilises, hopefully we can then come out with a ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Well, talking about putting money towards reducing carbon emissions, you have mentioned previously, Minister, a grant scheme supporting low carbon heating system and home insulation. Where are we with that and do you have any plans to launch a new proposition?

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

Yes, especially on incentives for heating systems that should be reported to you imminently. At the moment, we are in a pilot phase with contractors to help get an assurance certificate. So we are working with some contractors to help them with being able to install in a number of properties the different kinds of technology because we are offering this incentive scheme for a number of technologies, and so the incentive scheme should be launched within the next few months.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Is there anything in there to help the industry in as much as we have on the Island? I imagine the number of people capable of installing oil fired boilers we hope would be installing the future heat pumps of various descriptions. Is there anything in your scheme to help retrain people?

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

Yes, up at Highlands, there is a course that has been going on for a while now to help support businesses and contractors to be able to adapt their skills and green their skills to be able to install these new technologies or different technologies through this accreditation scheme. Of course, this is part of that, so we have been talking with contractors and installers to encourage them to come on to the pilot scheme and so we have a number of them who came on the scheme to be able to get this accreditation so that they are able to install. We could launch that scheme again if this is successful in this phase. So it is a continuation of discussions with the industry.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Do you feel the first phase was successful?

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

So it was a pilot phase now so I think there were 20 houses that were specifically to help the contractors get accreditation on to the scheme. It will then be launched to the public both for household and commercial buildings. This will be in the next few months it will be launched and that will then focus on households coming through these accredited contractors to be able to utilise the scheme.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

How many accredited contractors do you have now following the pilot?

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

I think it was 20 houses. I am assuming it is 20 contractors but I am not sure.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

So every house had a different contractor hopefully that was being skilled up?

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

I hope so or at least a different supplier putting it in.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

A final slightly off-piste question, Minister, on energy and electricity particularly. The Island has been divorced, if you like, from some of these major increases in the cost of electricity that we have seen just about everywhere else. That is not going to last for ever. Do you have a view on how we are going to help Islanders through this major increase in the cost of electricity when it arrives?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, we have to see what arrives but I think we are not unaware of pricing pressures in the market and so there is work going on. One of the advantages we are in is we can see what other jurisdictions have tried in the way of price support and so we can explore what has worked elsewhere and we have enough time to think about how that might be adapted to the Jersey situation. So there are many different schemes that have now been tried and I think, should it become necessary, then we will be able to act quite quickly to support prices.

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

Just to support the Minister's view, I am now part of the Ministerial Working Group on the Cost of Living so Ministers come together to discuss the cost of living crisis from a number of angles and the energy price increase potentially is now on the agenda and it will be a standing point on the agenda. Again, we are working in dialogue with Jersey Electricity to try to minimise whatever impact is coming potentially down the line.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I am going to ask you the question: how important is it to try to do as much work as possible before the price increase arrives? I am conscious that installing insulation in your house before the price increase comes is probably one of the best things you could do because it will insulate you literally and metaphorically for a number of years.

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

Absolutely. It is extremely important that we prepared the Islanders, especially those most vulnerable to any potential increase so, therefore, that is why it is great that this particular Ministerial Working Group we have energy as a standing agenda item. We also think energy efficiency is really key so that is something that we need to look at because we have a number of housing stock that will need to be made more efficient from an energy efficiency perspective and we are looking into schemes and what that looks like. We have had insulation schemes in the past. Do we need to adapt them especially for most vulnerable households? That has been looked into in the past. Can we do that again, what does that look like and how do we adapt?

Deputy S.G. Luce:

How quickly can you do that if you decide to do that again, being conscious that this electricity increase may come in the next 6, 12 or 18 months?

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

From an energy efficiency perspective, it is something that we could launch pretty quickly. The E.P.C. (Energy Performance Certificate) is also coming to be launched both for commercial properties and households and that will help people to see what the energy efficiency of their household is. I think that is really important to understand where they could make those changes and within the heating incentive scheme, whoever is getting the incentive scheme will also have to undertake an E.P.C. to be able to understand where they could make those changes in the efficiency scale as well and we would then potentially help with that as well.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

So E.P.C. is pretty much here already?

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes.

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

Yes.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Going on to the performance certificates, we have seen those advertised in French estate agents' windows for years. Do you think that will come to Jersey? Will we see in estate agents' windows the performance certificates of properties in their windows? Do you see something that like coming?

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

That is the aim of launching this scheme from both a commercial and household perspective.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Do you have an idea of a timeline on that?

The Minister for the Environment:

It is underway now, is it not?

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

It is imminent because it has to be part of the Energy Incentive Scheme which is launched in the next few months. E.P.C. will be part of that.

The Minister for the Environment:

So what you are really saying is when might it become compulsory?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Indeed.

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

2025.

The Minister for the Environment:

2025, yes.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

In your delivery plan, Minister, you mentioned a reconstituted energy forum. Where are you with that and how do you see them feeding into the work we have just been discussing?

The Minister for the Environment:

Deputy Jeune has been doing that.

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

Yes, we have now reconstituted it. We have a terms of reference. We have requested for members. We have asked some members who were already members before, energy suppliers who were on the former energy forum, and we are also advertising in the *J.E.P. (Jersey Evening Post)* for anybody within the terms of reference who would like to also join. We have our first meeting in April and, hopefully, then quarterly going forward.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

So you will have a new ...

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

Yes, it is already in the diary and ready to go.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Do you feel you are moving quickly enough? I only say that because I read some media coverage recently which said we are not happy that Jersey is moving fast enough with climate change and carbon emissions.

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

From my agenda, I feel that we are moving as fast as we can from a number of elements from the incentive schemes but also from bringing in Islanders along with us both from the Net-Zero Network where we are encouraging Islanders to join to help us on this journey but also from energy forum discussions and the discussions with stakeholders. As you mentioned, Deputy, it is up skilling as well and making sure that transition also is sustainable so it is very important that we up skill those industries that will be providing us with the changes that we need in the carbon neutral roadmap. So that is part of that and maybe it looks like it is not here but there is a lot of work that is going on behind the scenes to get us to a point where we can then switch and be able to help Islanders make those changes.

The Minister for the Environment:

It would be very easy to go off too quickly, not have all the building blocks in place and end up discrediting the system and you end up with headlines about how the system is not working. Everybody is trying to get their heating changed and they cannot find anybody to do it or the scheme has not been run properly and they have been swindled by people who are cowboys and are not doing it properly. The U.K. has had a real problem getting home heating sorted and hopefully we have learnt from that and what we are very committed to doing is to make sure that the scheme, when it launches, is the right one and it works really well so that we do not get that kind of criticism.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Well, just moving on but on the same subject, greenhouse gas emissions inventory is considered the K.P.I. (Key Performance Indicator) if you like for the success of a carbon neutral roadmap. Unless we have got it wrong, we do not appear to have had an update since 2020 so we do not even know what the 2021 greenhouse gas emissions were. Do you have that data or when is it coming?

The Minister for the Environment:

It operates in arrears. It operates 2 years in arrears.

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

Two years in arrears, yes.

The Minister for the Environment:

Because it takes a long time to calculate.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Is that good enough because, obviously, if we do not have the information for 2021 at the movement and we are now in 2023, technology moves on.

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

It is the international best practice standards that exist. We utilise a company that is doing it for the U.K.

Group Director, Natural Environment:

Yes, based in the U.K. for the U.K. and we hang on their coattails so that is information that we receive from further afield.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Are we obliged to do the same as they do? If they are performing badly, do we have to perform badly too?

Group Director, Natural Environment:

No, but we do have to rely on their information.

The Minister for the Environment:

It is a U.N. (United Nations) framework that is followed. The U.N. framework for climate change, is it?

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

The U.N.F.C.C.C. (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), yes.

The Minister for the Environment:

The U.N.F.C.C.C. that we would follow. There are a set series of procedures that have to be gone through to make those calculations and it is not a back of the envelope kind of thing.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Do you agree that that data is a K.P.I. for our carbon neutral roadmap?

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes.

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

Yes, I think so especially because our carbon neutral roadmap is ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

We are working 2 years behind on a roadmap that will use data that is 2 years out of date.

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, it is a key but not the only K.P.I.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

No.

The Minister for the Environment:

We can see what is happening to fuel sales.

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

Yes.

The Minister for the Environment:

In terms of transfer of boilers, there are lots of other things we can do. That is the gold standard one that we will ultimately be judged on I think when it comes to 2030, 2035 and 2050 and all the rest of it but we can tell a lot.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

In your delivery plan, again, I am talking the carbon neutral roadmap, you mentioned legislative changes. Can you elaborate a little bit further on what they are or where they will be made?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, we have talked a bit about some of them already. In terms of building standards, we want to make sure that we are building in best practice throughout the economy, if I can put it that way. We are not just seeing this as a simple kind of subsidy for this or incentive for that and that we build resilience into the whole system. That may well involve changes to regulations or it may mean

changes to legislation sitting around lots of different sectors of the economy to make them more responsive to the situation we are in.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

You do not necessarily have anything specific in mind other than the fact that you will be expected to make legislative changes?

The Minister for the Environment:

If a barrier or something emerges that we need to act on then, yes, we will do it.

Group Director, Natural Environment:

That is probably fair to say that that sits within the context of other jurisdictions who are seeking to make similar target reductions in carbon reductions so those will be very similar.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I presume that would extend as far as building byelaws again. Are we going to continue to upgrade building bylaws?

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, and that is part of the water strategy we have already talked about with rainwater capture and grey water. We have to be thinking all the time about how all these things interact. We can put less pressure on the sewage system if we are using grey water. We have to learn from the mistakes we have made in the past and not repeat them.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

A final question. It is a little bit divorced from where we have been talking about energy, electricity and carbon. Support for the agricultural sector in your rural economy work, Minister. Do you have any detail about any new initiatives you might have for the agricultural sector?

[12:00]

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, I think that mostly sits in the Economic Development Department. We consult on these things because the financial wherewithal for changes for supporting the agricultural sector sits within E.D. (Economic Development). We have joint groups where we discuss these things to make sure that those support measures are targeted towards the public good so that they are not just a subsidy, say, for all. They might be targeted on particular practices or achieving particular outcomes, soil

quality or whatever. So the policy discussion happens between us but the actual funding and the detail of the funding mechanism happens through E.D.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay, and you talked about public good and I presume you have a lot of input in increasing biodiversity or improving biodiversity of landscape character and all the sort of things that we see on the Planning Committee?

The Minister for the Environment:

I do not think there is much of a difference between me and the Minister for Economic Development in that regard.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay, that is good.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

You mentioned soil quality just now and we are aware that in the U.K. there is much work being done on soil quality. Where are we with that? We have spoken before about it and we were undertaking surveys in the Island with Cranfield University, I think it was.

Group Director, Natural Environment:

We were proposing to use Cranfield University; we were proposing to undertake a PhD. We looked for better value more locally to use J.I.C.A.S. (Jersey International Centre of Advanced Studies) over here but unfortunately we have fallen foul of a bit of a dearth in applicants for a 3 year PhD so we are going to go to consulting now. We are now scoping up work that we can put out to consultants and it may well be that those consultants are indeed somebody like Cranfield University ironically again, or the equivalent of what used to be the Soil Association who might be able to assist us in delivering that type of work. But first of all we have got to try and work out what it is we want to know. We talked initially about the potential to get a greater understanding on the carbon sequestration but I think we need to go wider than that. Yes, indeed, we do need to know about carbon sequestration, not least because we have got funding from a climate emergency funding pot so we need to be able to fully justify spending money from that area. But I think we can spread it wider to try and get a better agricultural picture across the Island. We do have a relatively decent picture on soil quality but it is relatively decent and it needs to be updated, so it is still ongoing. The idea would be to put it out in the next couple of months to try and get an understanding of who we would like to come and do that work for us, and then we will take it forward from there. The money - because it is climate emergency funding - continues to roll on so it is not lost, which is good news. But this approach might mean we can deliver results quicker than a 3 year PhD - even though the

idea was to put milestones along the way in a 3 year PhD - we can probably target this a little bit quicker and more effectively for what we want.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

You mentioned, and I am just trying to formulate this question in my head as it comes to me, Minister, so bear with me.

The Minister for the Environment:

It allows me time to formulate my answer.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

You spoke about working very closely with other Ministers, and particularly the Minister for Infrastructure. We talked about soil quality; I am aware there is a by-product at the end of a liquid waste process that comes out of Bellozanne which historically has been put back on to agricultural land. Obviously there are requirements from supermarkets and multiples for food production and it cannot go on land for food production so historically it has gone on land in Jersey which was used for flower production. Now, I am aware that flower production - daffodils specifically - are reducing greatly. Have you had any discussions with the Minister for Infrastructure about how this end product, to call it that, might be disposed of?

The Minister for the Environment:

I have but in a slightly different context because the discussion is more about the future of how we might use the outflow from Bellozanne to improve our water supply situation. That would obviously require treating the water to a much higher standard than it is currently treated, the corollary of that being that we produce a more concentrated effluent which may not be as appropriate for that kind of thing, I do not know. We have not got into that level of detail.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I was thinking specifically of not a liquid but a solid waste product that comes out of liquid waste treatment works at Bellozanne, which historically has gone back to land. The question is I suppose, basically, are we in a position to continue to do that or will we be?

The Minister for the Environment:

I have not discussed that. I do not know whether you ...

Group Director, Natural Environment:

I think there is always a discussion with the supermarket companies as to whether they will accept that material going on to the land, hence it has not been on potatoes and it has gone on to flowers.

I think it is an interesting point you raise there because we are now going to see a significant reduction in the land take used for potatoes and so where is it going to go? The backstop is always an energy from waste plant which seems to be a bit of a waste of resource. But I think we have got to balance off the increasing levels of (a) scepticism from the multiples and (b) regulatory requirements, versus the Island's need to get rid of what is essentially a waste material.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay, thank you for that. I am going to move over to water, Minister. You mentioned recycling water potentially; but can I just ask off the top, where are we with the development of the strategy for water and do we have any timelines?

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, so it is going to be, as I have already hinted, a bigger piece of work than I think it was possibly originally thought - I just happened to have the page open on the water strategy - because there is work in the carbon neutral roadmap that talks about it and in the Bridging Island Plan. I think that work is starting now. I am talking to Jersey Water about how we scope it out. I would expect that work to go on for ... I do not think it is going to be a one year job; I think it is going to be a 2 to 3 year job to produce that, so I would expect that not to be finished until 2025.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Could you just expand very generally on the scope of the water strategy? I presume it will take everything into account, not just the recycling or potential recycling of water.

The Minister for the Environment:

So I think it absolutely has to involve water supply, which is critical, and there are many elements to that in terms of where might extra supply come from. That in turn needs to be based on our forecasts for population and household growth and our response to P.F.A.S. (Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances) so again a complex picture. It has got to be about flood management which is something we have also talked about. It has got to be about wastewater and how we deal with wastewater. I think those are probably the major things.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

You have got some fairly major ticket items there, Minister, I mean ...

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, a big piece of work.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

... this is not something you are going to do in 2 or 3 weeks.

The Minister for the Environment:

No, 2 or 3 years I said.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

That is the sort of timescale is 2 or 3 years?

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes.

Group Director, Natural Environment:

I think it is fair to say it is going to be multi-departmental in its approach from a Government perspective because we are going to need to consider economic implications, financial implications, agricultural implications, alternative cropping and climate change, so it does not just affect ... it is not what it initially perhaps started out as when we were thinking about it historically which was a quantity and quality assessment; it is much wider than that and it is more wholesale.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

We are going to Jersey Water on Friday as it turns out to look at the desalination plant, because it is a reverse osmosis it might be a process that could be used for recycling of water. One of the questions I am sure we will ask them: are you aware of when Jersey Water need to make a decision on their future direction, because if they need a new reservoir it will be a 20-plus year lead-in?

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, and there is the question of whether a new reservoir is the best option. There have been several options they have already scoped out in their own draft plan, one of which of course was raising Val de la Mare, one of which was building Val de la Mare Reservoir further down the valley, one of which is a new desalination plant and a new reservoir somewhere else. These are all options that are under consideration. We had a water crisis last summer; we were heading downhill in reserves very quickly at a point in the last summer and the expectation has got to be with climate change that we might face that sort of situation more frequently. When does the point come when you need a decision? Well, it is like all these things, is it not, you can delay of course but the point of a water strategy would be to decide that. So what I am saying is I do not think we can make that decision within the next year, I think we will make it within that water strategy. I think the water strategy has to determine where what our future water demand is and where we think that demand is going to come from. That has to be one of the central objectives of that strategy.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Do you think the strategy will ask the question of whether our water provider on the Island needs to be State owned completely or whether it can be in-house or whether a continuation of a private company is the way forward?

The Minister for the Environment:

I think that probably is a question that is worth asking ourselves again but I do not think it sits at the top of my mind, partly because I think we are quite well served by Jersey Water. It has done a pretty good job.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Can I pick up on storage, and I suppose it is stimulated once again by the scenario at Grands Vaux where there was a suggestion that it could be used for better water management. We spoke much about Gigoulande - going back in the Island Plan - an amendment moved that towards leaving it as it is. There has been talk about that being used for solid waste reception, if you like. I understand there is not as much ... and this came from a qualified person who suggested it would be perfectly adequate for water storage. What is your view on that? Should that be followed up?

The Minister for the Environment:

It is a bit of a tricky one. It is not our site so to some extent we are beholden to what the operator wants to do with the site; we cannot force them to use it for water storage. The current plan, as I understand it, is that they are going to bring forward plans to use it for inert waste storage. I think it is fair to say that Jersey Water are operating on the assumption that that is unlikely to be an option for them in the future.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

From a Governmental point of view would you be in favour of that being used for inert recycled waste storage?

The Minister for the Environment:

I think that gets into the territory of planning applications and so I do not really want to state a view on that.

Principal Planning Policy Officer:

Could I just confirm there, Minister, sorry to interrupt there, but La Gigoulande does benefit from an extant planning permission for inert waste storage and a degree of recycling of materials, so there is a planning permission in place there. That was purely to take up the waste issue once La Collette is full to capacity.

The Minister for the Environment:

So that has to be the assumption of where it is going to go.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Getting back to my previous question about should the States own Jersey Water completely, is it right that a provider of something so essential is outside of Government control; do you find it concerning that the direction for inert waste for example is being driven by private companies? La Gigoulande have made a decision, they do not want it. There is an option at Simon Sand; at the moment that is not happening. We are being driven by the commercial sector into storing our inert waste in super fill at La Collette now?

The Minister for the Environment:

I think “driven” is perhaps putting it a little too strongly. There are a lot of meetings going on between the private operators and Government to try and understand what their aspirations are and how they can be made to work for the Island. Clearly talking about strategic issues like this, it is not just a decision for a private operator, those decisions are going to have to reflect what policy framework is set by Government. We cannot mandate, or at least it is quite hard to mandate, but we can work together though and that is a far better way of achieving an outcome if we are working together with a shared understanding of each other’s goals.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I appreciate that, Minister, but from my side of the table when we have the Infrastructure Department telling us we have a problem with inert waste, we cannot go here because La Gigoulande have made a decision, we cannot go here because Simon Sand have made a decision, the only option we have left is to start stockpiling it on our own land at La Collette; it can feel slightly different to the way you have just described.

The Minister for the Environment:

There is a short term issue. I think in the sense that we have a super filling site and the options that are potentially available, as Alistair has said in terms of using La Gigoulande, it has an extant planning permission, it may well want to apply for other planning permissions. At some point that site will almost certainly come on stream. We have got a gap and that is the thing we are trying to manage.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I am going to take us back to water because I am aware that I dragged us off that subject and the last question I want to make about water is to do with P.F.A.S. at St. Ouen and I just wanted to know

if your natural environment team have any updates on the study of the groundwater in St. Brelade, Pont Marquet and Five Mile Road area?

[12:15]

Group Director, Natural Environment:

Phase 1 of that, which was essentially the collation of data and the establishment of gaps, is finished. This is the hydrogeological assessment; phase 1 is finished and is about to be published on a dedicated website. So, yes, all the information will be up there as to what has been found so far. Where we are going next, so 2023, we have got the need to put bore holes in to establish where we are going to find any further movement of plumes, trying to establish exactly what is where. That requires planning permission because we are putting bore holes into S.S.I.s (Site of Special Interest) and so that is what we are engaging in at the moment.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Do we have a date for the publication of that first stage?

Group Director, Natural Environment:

Annoyingly, no, I do not. I have got a piece of paper here that tells me we are about to do it but I do not have a date.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I would imagine you are not in a position to tell us here today what the outcome of that stage 1 is?

Group Director, Natural Environment:

I am not. What I can do though is make sure that you are aware of it by sending it to you as Scrutiny.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

But you have the information in front of you, not in front of us, but somewhere in ...

Group Director, Natural Environment:

In the department at the moment we do, yes.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Yes, so you have got the information, you just need a date to publish it?

Group Director, Natural Environment:

Yes.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

So that could be imminently then?

Group Director, Natural Environment:

It could be imminently, yes, but I cannot ... we are working on it but I am not sure what the date is.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

But you have the data?

Group Director, Natural Environment:

Yes.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Okay, we will ...

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Has this been signed off by the Minister yet?

The Minister for the Environment:

No, I have not seen it. But it is not just ... the website that we are talking about where we publish to is not run by natural environments, it covers all the work we are doing on P.F.A.S. and I think public health are the instigators of it. So there is a series of pieces of work, as you know, going on relating to P.F.A.S., not just the environment part of it. It needs coordination with public health as well.

Group Director, Natural Environment:

Who are also ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

It is a difficult situation obviously, Minister. You need to have all your data absolutely correct before you publish; on the other hand there is an awful lot of people want to know what is going on and how quickly we can get on and try to solve the issue, so time is of the essence, especially if you have the data.

Group Director, Natural Environment:

We are part of a wider project. I would agree, we are part of a wider project that fits in with the recruitment of specialists on to the expert panel that is now being put together to try and provide solutions for P.F.A.S., both from a health perspective and an environment perspective going forward.

The Minister for the Environment:

It is not just a case of publishing the data; it has to be extracted and put into a form that is readable by a layperson.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

We appreciate that. Okay, I am going to move on because there is one subject that we definitely need to cover with you in the next 14, 15 minutes, and that is fisheries, specifically the Marine Spatial Plan, Minister. We are aware you are out to consultation at the moment; can I ask how these meetings are progressing, how many workshops you have had and when you anticipate being in a position to publish something?

The Minister for the Environment:

We have had 5 meetings; I was at one of them last week, Deputy Jeune was at another one, I was at the fishing one, but we have tried to target those meetings at different user groups. That is an initial stakeholder engagement, with emphasis on “initial”, I expect those engagements to continue throughout the period of doing the Marine Spatial Plan. There is also a callout to the public upcoming and invitations to relevant organisations, so there is quite a decent level of engagement and we want that engagement, we need that engagement. This thing has to be, like the Island Plan, something which in the end people cohere around. It is not going to work if it does not turn out like that. In terms of big moments, there will be a Draft Island Plan produced, I think we are planning early, mid-summer and then ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Sorry, Draft Marine Spatial Plan.

The Minister for the Environment:

Sorry, what did I say?

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Draft Island Plan. I was going to say, that will be exciting. I look forward to that.

The Minister for the Environment:

That might please you, yes. No, Marine Spatial Plan, mid-summer and a 12-week consultation period that will follow that, which is the same as we have for an island plan. So that is the public consultation that will ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Do you envisage the same sort of process as an island plan? So, okay, you have initial consultation and initial publication, but are we going to have inquiries in public with somebody from outside of the Island looking at the various policies?

The Minister for the Environment:

No. So the Island Plan, as you know, is a process governed by statute. There is no statutory process for the Marine Spatial Plan. I suppose we could have gone down the route of creating one but that would have added another year of primary legislation and the instruction in the Bridging Island Plan was for the Minister for the Environment to bring forward a Marine Spatial Plan. So I have devised a process which I think takes the elements that are essential from the Island Plan process and translates them into the Marine Spatial Plan process. It is the first one; we are not at the same level of maturity as we are with the Island Plan process. I do not expect this to be the last word in process for creating a Marine Spatial Plan. We will feel our way and make corrections as we go if we can do so in the relevant timeframes. I expect the next one will be done slightly differently, I mean, we are going to learn, are we not?

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Just to recap; a consultation, a draft, and the process following the draft publication?

The Minister for the Environment:

Is a 12-week consultation.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Another draft with another consultation or ...

The Minister for the Environment:

No, not another consultation after that, and then there will be a final plan, and I think we have not really decided ... I am assuming it will go to the States.

Group Director, Natural Environment:

We have talked about it potentially going to the States.

The Minister for the Environment:

So it will go to the States for final ratification.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Going back to your meetings with fishermen; what was the feedback like? Clearly they are being potentially squeezed if we have a windfarm implementation and they are being squeezed at the inshore end; what was their feedback?

The Minister for the Environment:

I think the fishermen have legitimate concerns about the extent to which their knowledge ... I think their biggest concern, from what I have heard, is they feel that they have a lot of knowledge and they want to make sure that knowledge is reflected in the Marine Spatial Plan. I want that so I want to work with them on that. You will have to speak to them to get more detail I guess on what their take on this is, but the whole process depends upon getting that knowledge and understanding what different users of the marine environment expect from it, want from it in the future, what they are worried about. We know quite a lot in Government; we have got a lot of scientific data, a heck of a lot, and a really good evidence base. It is one of the reasons I am so confident about the process is there is a really, really good marine resources team who have done a lot of work over many years and see the Marine Spatial Plan as the culmination of that. But we absolutely accept and know that there are gaps in that knowledge and that is what this consultation process is about, filling those gaps.

Group Director, Natural Environment:

We are working with the fisheries sector particularly after their initial opportunity to consult, to make sure that we can give them as much time and this particular ability to pass on that information through extra workshops with them. The marine resources team are very keen to make sure that we have got that particular element of knowledge in. That is over and above the initial envisaged ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I am sure my fellow panel members would agree with me when I say I am absolutely confident that the marine resources team are top notch and we could not ask for better people to be doing this work; hugely knowledgeable and capable. But, nevertheless, they are doing something which fishermen feel very challenged about, they are very concerned about, and one of the things they are concerned about, Minister, is this ... it is an internationally recognised figure of 30 per cent to protect and they are very concerned that this 30 per cent of protected areas within our territory waters will affect them to a far greater extent than it might to the other people who are fishing inside our territorial waters. What assurance can you give to our local fishermen that you are going to try and find a way to marry those 2 ideals, because they do not sit comfortably together really?

The Minister for the Environment:

They might not, but they might. The overarching strategy here is for a sustainable fishery, so if we get it right everyone wins and that is the goal. Now, obviously there are caveats around that. There

may be conflicts which become very hard to manage. Every Island Plan has tensions in it and I would expect a Marine Spatial Plan to have tensions in it. But the 30 by 30 proposal which is now being adopted internationally is not absolutely ... you know, it does not dictate exactly what the forms of protection would be in every situation. There is flexibility there, so seasonal protection, species protection, these things can be fine-tuned to work for us.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Could it be fine-tuned to the point where we could designate the area around a windfarm a marine protected area?

The Minister for the Environment:

It might. I mean, I would not want to prejudge the Marine Spatial Plan on that but there is work now being done on how you can use those structures to encourage promotion of marine life, definitely, and I think that is another of the benefits of coming to this mature stage of the technology. We are able to benefit from a lot of that learning.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I mean, personally I understand the concept of sustainable fishing absolutely and I am committed to it too, but I am sure we would both agree, Minister, to get to the point where we have a sustainable fishery is difficult in as much as fishermen are going to go through a financially really challenging stage before we can get to that point. How do you think we are going to get over that? Are you going to be able to find money in order to help the fleet through that difficult period?

The Minister for the Environment:

We have made a start. The Minister for Economic Development has announced a £300,000 package and that is tied in the same way that it is very much modelled on the rural support scheme and it is tied to measures that are public good and our officers work together with officers in Economic Development to make sure that we are aligned on those sorts of measures. I think it has been quite a good co-operation.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Good, I mean, it has always been difficult, farming and fishing as well, when we you have an economic side, marketing, the amount of money you could get from the marketplace and, on the other hand, trying to talk about biodiversity and marine resources. It has always been difficult between the Economic Development Department and the Environment Department to find a way forward for farming and fishing.

Group Director, Natural Environment:

Interestingly, less so nowadays. Whether it is personality based or whether it is how the politics are lining up, we are seeing much more aligned thinking between both Environment and Economic Development.

The Minister for the Environment:

We invite the Economic Development officer responsible for fishing to regular marine resource meetings, so there is an absolute understanding from both an environmental and the economic point of view of the issues that the industry is facing.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Can we be sure that the utopian, if I can call it that, Marine Spatial Plan just does not overtake the reality of the fishermen out there in a boat catching fish? Can we be sure that it does not get embroiled in red tape which no fishermen likes at all and so they are not prevented from earning their living?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, I can assure you that we are not trying to do that. What I am saying though is the point of having a Marine Spatial Plan is to change things for the better. That is change. So if what people are saying is they do not want any change at all and simply want to carry on exactly as they are now for all time, then I would say, no, there is going to be change. My view is that it is going to be change for the better and, as I say, we are completely committed to that engagement to make sure there is that engagement. There will be tensions, we cannot get away from that. There will be tensions in terms of possibly spatial tensions, possibly tensions around practices, species being targeted, all sorts of things like that. But we have to start having those discussions now so that it is a plan as opposed to a “we will just see what they do” kind of thing.

Group Director, Natural Environment:

I think that is one of the benefits or the necessities of bringing them into discussions to try and bring them with us and to get as much information as possible, because the concept of a just transition which is material in any area where you are looking to change behaviour from one thing to something significantly different. That does not have to mean just a financial transition; that can be a time based one or a measures based one that is also in place. So we need to work out what that would look like for the fishing community and indeed every other community that has engaged in the spatial planning dialogue.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I think the point is that fishermen have to make a long term investment, whether it be in boats, gear or what have you and if there is to be change it needs to be properly managed and communicated.

The Minister for the Environment:

I am going to guess that you are going to be making sure that we are held to account on that.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

We will do our best.

[12:30]

Deputy S.G. Luce:

When it comes to managing change, Minister, just as an aside, we recently saw you sign a special protection area down at the Minquiers for wildlife. How do you propose to monitor that? Obviously it is not just fishermen that are affected; we have got some commercial work that goes down there with tourists, we have got obviously residents of huts, and similarly to Les Ecréhous; how do you see moving forward with those 2 offshore reefs?

The Minister for the Environment:

We have done Les Ecréhous so we have got some experience from that. The Minquiers one was put in place after considerable consultation with the Minquiers owners, the people that have the huts out there. We do not see the people who go out there regularly for the huts as enforcement, but we do see them as intelligence. They are in general, I think it is fair to say, happy to fulfil that role. So they can alert us if something is going on, and literally alert us so that we can get a R.I.B. (rigid inflatable boat) in the water and get out there if we feel like there is a serious issue. In fact I was talking to officers only the other day: "How quickly can you actually get there?" If the R.I.B. is in the water they can be there in 30 minutes, if they are at Howard Davis it is an hour and 20. The aim is to enforce it when it has to be enforced. There is nobody out there at the moment so we are okay at the moment but as the tourist season picks up ... I think it is also true to say that the R.I.B. companies have been contacted and are happy with it and also will help us if they see activities that are not good.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I do not want to go there because I will be a bit conflicted. But going 2 steps back, can I just - and we are just about there and I am going to make this the last little area for questioning, Minister - sea fisheries regulations, since the last time we have met we passed the T.C.A. (Trade and Cooperation Agreement), the Draft Sea Fisheries (T.C.A. - Licensing of Fishing Boats) et cetera; it has gone through the States. Can you provide us with an update on how work has progressed since that time?

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes. You are talking particularly about replacement vessels?

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Yes, particularly, and how is monitoring of the French fleet going, knowing that they should have trackers and all the requirements that we have got in the agreement.

The Minister for the Environment:

In terms of the replacement vessels, there have I think been 6 applications that have been approved or are about to be approved. Most of them fit under the exceptions category in that they were boats that were replaced before the T.C.A. came into place, so that is the category that means that they are allowed to ...

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Sorry to interrupt, was that a surprise on the numbers because I thought the numbers that we were expecting were much lower than that?

The Minister for the Environment:

Two to 3 I think we initially thought but that was my misunderstanding of information that was provided to me by officers. There are 2 to 3 that ... I am going to have to try and get this right in terms of my phrasing, but there are 2 to 3 that are not only getting their licence under the exception but were they not covered by an exception would breach the rules that apply to every other boat. So the other ones are getting their licence under an exception but they fit within the rules, if you see what I mean. That is the reason for that discrepancy.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

So from now on replacement vessels will not have the exemption or exception, if you like, applied in as much as everything that has been happening while we have been negotiating this situation will have been dealt with?

The Minister for the Environment:

I cannot guarantee that without talking to officers but as far as I know we do not expect there to be any others there were replaced or applied to be replaced before the T.C.A.

Group Director, Natural Environment:

No, and we do not know of any other vessels. To answer the other part of that question in terms of how we are getting on spotting what is going on in the water, quite well is the response to that, which

is identified by the fact that we have got 2 French vessels at the moment who we have got their strings of pots in custody. So, yes, we are dealing with them robustly.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Historically, Minister, I think I might remember that the amount of monies allocated for fuel for fisheries protection might have been limited, or to a point where there was a budget, if you like. Is that something now that we are just going to say we will use whatever fuel we need and we will find a way to pay for it later?

Group Director, Natural Environment:

I think it is fair to say that through reallocation of funding, through Government Plan bids, through Brexit or funding packages, we are in a slightly better place than ... because I know exactly what you are referring to.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

We will not get to October, November and say: "The boat cannot go out because we have not got any money for fuel."

Group Director, Natural Environment:

We just cannot afford as an Island jurisdiction to do that, certainly from a reputational perspective.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

That is an assurance that I wanted. We have just got a few little bits and pieces I am not going to go to, Minister, that we will save for next time: avian flu, planning amendments and conservation areas, but I am sure they can all wait. Can I just ask if any other members have got anything they would like to say?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

No.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

All right, Minister, we are just after our time but I thank you, Assistant Minister and your team for coming this morning.

The Minister for the Environment:

Thank you very much indeed.

[12:36]