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States of Jersey
States Assembly



États de Jersey
Assemblée des États

Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny

Panel

Quarterly Hearing

Witness: The Minister for the Environment

Tuesday, 3rd March 2026

Panel:

Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity (Chair)

Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South (Vice-Chair)

Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement

Connétable D. Johnson of St. Mary

Witnesses:

Deputy S.G. Luce of Grouville and St. Martin, The Minister for the Environment

Ms. K. Whitehead, Group Director, Regulation

Mr. W. Peggie, Group Director, Natural Environment

Mr. K. Pilley, Head of Place and Spatial Planning

[14:00]

Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity (Chair):

Welcome to this public hearing of the Environment, Housing, Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel. Today is 3rd March 2026 and this is our last quarterly hearing that we will be having with the Minister for the Environment for this political term. I would like to draw everyone's attention to the following. This hearing will be filmed and streamed live and the recording and transcript will be published afterwards on the States Assembly website. Please ensure all electronic devices are switched to

silent and, for any members of the public who have joined us in the room today, to not interfere in the proceedings and, as soon as the hearing is closed, please leave quietly. So we will start with the introductions. My name is Deputy Hilary Jeune and I am the Chair of the Environment, Housing, Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel.

Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South (Vice-Chair):

Deputy Tom Coles, Vice-Chair.

Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

Deputy Alex Curtis, panel member.

Connétable D. Johnson of St. Mary:

Constable David Johnson, panel member.

The Minister for the Environment:

Deputy Steve Luce, I am the Minister for the Environment.

Group Director, Regulation:

Kelly Whitehead, Group Director for Regulation.

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

Kevin Pilley, Head of Place and Spatial Planning.

Group Director, Natural Environment:

Willie Peggie, Director for Natural Environment.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you, Minister. We have got quite a lot of questions for you today because you have done quite a lot of work and have lodged quite a lot of propositions before the end of the term, so we are focusing many of our questions on those areas.

The Minister for the Environment:

Thank you, Chair. Could I just say this is not our last meeting. We are going to have a P.F.A.S. (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) meeting.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

We are, and I was going to mention that later, but this is our last quarterly hearing. Yes, we are absolutely going to have a specific P.F.A.S. hearing right at the end to wrap up our work together.

But this is focusing, and I suppose it is a good time because our first lot of questions is about the draft Water Law that you have put forward, and it states that the new standard in relation to P.F.A.S. is to be achieved within 5 years as recommended by the P.F.A.S. Scientific Advisory Panel. Could you provide more context about the rationale for achieving the water quality standards set out within the regulations within the next 5 years?

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, thank you, Chair. I am sure everybody will know that we have been doing a huge amount of work on P.F.A.S. in the last 2 years. We engaged a P.F.A.S. panel, scientific P.F.A.S. panel, who are global experts in the subject and we asked them to look at the whole issue around P.F.A.S. in Jersey. They have, over the course of 2 years, come up with a number of reports. The final report, which will be the one that just brings everything together in one place, will be issued later this month. But we have had interim reports on the subjects of health, particularly how we are going to treat people who have elevated levels of P.F.A.S. in their blood. But more recently, report 4 was to do with the environment and an interim report 4 dealt with water specifically. That was issued just before Christmas and we know, and have known for over 6 months now, that the recommendation from the panel was going to be a level of 4 nanograms per litre and that the panel were going to recommend that we allow a 5-year period for that level to be reached by Jersey Water. Now, that has been informed by a huge amount of data that the panel collected and meetings they had with global experts. Certainly, many global experts thought that the level could be achieved in a shorter period of time, many thought 3 years, but the panel was certainly very understanding of the fact that some of the physical constraints at the 2 existing Jersey Water treatment centres would mean that it would be far more challenging than somewhere else where there is a flat area of empty land to start building extra plant on. So they have come to the conclusion that 5 years is the right amount of time to allow Jersey Water and 4 nanograms has been reached because of the amount of P.F.A.S. that they feel should be accumulated in your body on a daily basis. I cannot remember the technical term off the top of my head, but as we know, P.F.A.S. accumulation occurs in 2 ways, 80 per cent of your P.F.A.S. intake comes from food and 20 per cent comes from water, because you have to ingest P.F.A.S. to accumulate it in your body. What the panel have done is looked at the values of P.F.A.S. levels in food, mainly in the U.K. (United Kingdom) because obviously in Jersey we import the vast majority of our food that is eaten in Jersey, and they have said this is the amount of P.F.A.S. that an average person on an average diet will accumulate from food. That allows this level of water in order not to exceed the daily threshold. In this case, the level of water is 4 nanograms per litre. Had there been a situation where they felt more P.F.A.S. was being ingested by food, it may well have been that they would have come up with a lower level. But they have said for a very long period of time that 4 was going to be the maximum. They were not going to increase 4 to potentially 6 or 7. There was always the possibility that they might have reduced it further. But in this case, they have looked at the evidence for food, P.F.A.S. in food, they have done a lot of testing locally,

but they have taken the average values from the U.K. given that the majority of local people's diet will be foods that come from the U.K. So I think that is how we have come to 4 and 5. There is a lot of discussion going on about 4 and 5, but certainly that is the recommendations of the panel. And those are the ones I have lodged in the Assembly for debate later.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

We have received a submission from Jersey Water for this. Just from their response, could you provide a bit more detail about the process of consulting and engaging with Jersey Water in relation to, I suppose, not only the scientific panel, but also in when there was the decision to put this recommendation forward at this point? Because, of course, you could have waited in another moment to do it.

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, I did consider the possibility of going to consultation on the level of 4 nanograms and the time of 5 years. But it seemed clear to me that everybody who is involved in water was consulted quite heavily over a long period of time. Jersey Water were aware of these limits and have been for over 6 months. So I thought long and hard about it and thought, no, there are very few opportunities to debate this matter before the election. I am certainly very aware that, had I not done it now, the new Minister would have had to have time to be put in office, to be briefed, to bring forward a proposition of their own. That would have been at least another 6 months and I felt that the subject had been discussed enough and it had been discussed frequently enough and over a long enough period of time. Given that we, and I particularly, made a commitment that I wanted to do something about P.F.A.S. within my 2-year period, given that it was quite a short ministerial period, I took the decision to lodge the proposition and we will see what happens.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

How were the risks associated with the potential cost implications and technical solutions being considered and managed within that? I believe that there are potentially different technical solutions that could help Jersey Water get to this 4, and also of course there is different financial implications depending on the technical solutions.

The Minister for the Environment:

There is potentially, and I use the word "potentially" because we are not there yet, but there is potentially a very expensive option if we were to go down that route. But, as I say, Jersey Water have been aware of what is coming for quite some time. They have taken the decision to do a number of things, but they certainly are committed to investigating the best treatment for reducing P.F.A.S. in mains water and they need to do a full 12-month testing programme so they can have winter water, summer water, because obviously the amount of flow of water coming into their

reservoirs makes a difference. The most important thing is the amount of organic matter in the water makes a difference to which of the technologies works better. So they have started off immediately by adding some powder-activated carbon to the process, which is reducing or has reduced the levels of P.F.A.S. in drinking water currently. There is an understanding that powder-activated carbon has a place in the next year or 2, but it is not a long-term solution. Certainly, that has been discussed with them by the P.F.A.S. panel. The main challenge with powder-activated carbon is the waste product that comes out of it. Kelly may be able to talk more about it, but it is a process which involves a large amount of waste product which would have to be spread back on to agricultural land. Anyway, the granule-activated carbon and the ion exchange are the 2 methods which are being recommended by the panel following a short period of powder-activated carbon which will reduce levels until such a time as the other ones can come online. We have been told by Jersey Water that they prefer the granule-activated carbon and they can do that at both their Augrès and Handois treatment centres. They have known that for a while. It is incumbent upon them to look at the options. But certainly cost is something that they will have to consider. My position personally is quite clear from where I am the Minister for the Environment with responsibility to try to do the best I can to reduce the levels of P.F.A.S. in our water. I think I have given them, on recommendation by the panel, a very reasonable amount of time to get ready.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Do you think that they would be able to do whatever technical solution to get legally to 4, they would be able to do within 5 years; they have given you that confidence that they can do that?

The Minister for the Environment:

I know through the work I have done with what was originally the Nitrate Working Group and which is what is now the Action for Cleaner Water Group, which has been running for now well over 10 years, working with farmers and Jersey Water to see how we can reduce nitrate levels particularly and other chemical levels in the reservoirs. The derogations are something which has been used in the past, and I have said to Jersey Water, provided they were working properly and hard enough at the solutions and trying to find their way through, that a derogation by a future Minister would always be a possibility which would be one that would allow them that little bit of extra time if they needed it.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

The Minister for Treasury and Resources was answering an oral question in the States Assembly about the potential cost implications, and you have talked a bit about that. She mentioned that there will be considerations put to the States Assembly before the debate on this. Could you give us a bit more of an update on this development of cost implications? Will we be seeing this where you were mentioning that there is 2 choices really in that and what that looks like and really what is the

Government going to pay and what is Jersey Water expected to pay? It is very vague at the moment of understanding about how we will get to 4.

The Minister for the Environment:

The Investing in Jersey programme has been put together by Government and one of the items in it mentions P.F.A.S., and I think it is clear that, depending on what happens, that the Government might be prepared in some instances to put money into solving the P.F.A.S. situation. Certainly, we know that we have a P.F.A.S. hotspot at the airport which has been identified. It is different from the main situation which affects Jersey Water and the whole of the Island. But the airport situation is a hotspot. It is going to have to be remediated at some point. We are working with Ports to see how ...

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

We are focusing on the regulation at the moment, which obviously is for Jersey Water to meet this regulation that you are asking the States Assembly to agree in a few weeks' time. Where the concern is, at the moment it says within the proposition that there is no financial implications. We are hearing from Jersey Water that there potentially is quite a big inlay. I have heard early cost estimates could be between £140 million and £210 million. This is from their input to the scrutiny panel. My question then I suppose to you, Minister, because you are talking about Investing in Jersey, but will the Government be putting money towards this or is it expected that Jersey Water will pay for this, for whatever technology, to be able to reach that?

The Minister for the Environment:

That is a discussion that is going to have to be concluded at some point, Chair. But certainly Jersey Water is a private company. It has got private shareholders. It operates in an environment in Jersey where it supplies water to the general public. It is true, of course, that the States own a percentage, quite a large percentage of that shareholding. But my job as the Minister for the Environment is to look at the regulations and what I might do to try to help the P.F.A.S. situation with mains water. It is a slightly difficult and conflicted situation if you want me to comment about the shareholder responsibility as a Member of Government, whereby the shareholder might be asked to put money forward to help fund.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

So this is a bit different than what the Minister for Treasury and Resources was saying when she was saying that the cost implications will be put to the States Assembly, which she was saying last week about that. Are you saying that is a different thing because that is related to being a shareholder rather than being the fact that the Government is putting this Law in place and this standard in place and therefore the Government will then also put money towards that so that Jersey

Water will be able to reach that. Are you saying it is a different thing, I suppose, being a shareholder versus being ...?

[14:15]

The Minister for the Environment:

If we were in the U.K. I think this would be a very different situation where you would have an independent regulator putting forward the standards and the water companies would have to come up with ways of achieving the standards and how they would fund whatever process and infrastructure they needed to fund that. We have a situation here where, inside Government, we have a Minister for the Environment who is in charge of the regulation side as part of their portfolio and we have a Minister for Treasury and Resources who has a shareholder responsibility as a major shareholder in the water company, and it does give us conflicts, which we are still resolving around the table. For my part as the Minister for the Environment, I have said that I am very committed and I have been very committed to the work we have been doing with P.F.A.S. We engaged the P.F.A.S. panel. They are globally renowned. They are global experts and we asked them to come up with recommendations, which they have done. I think it is incumbent upon me as the Minister for the Environment to put forward those proposals, those recommendations, and if other parts of Government or other parts of the States Assembly, Backbenchers, want to challenge that, that is what the debating Chamber is for and I look forward to a debate in the Chamber potentially on the subject.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I suppose a final one on this and related to the cost and the financial implications, which of course, exactly as you said, it is for the States Assembly to decide in that widest thing of not just it being about a standard on the water, but how do you get to the point of being able to get to that standard. Jersey Water has submitted to the panel that their potential water bill increase could be as much as 70 per cent to 110 per cent based on the potential cost implications associated with the draft regulation. Are you worried about this potential increase of water?

The Minister for the Environment:

I am part of a Government who are absolutely committed to not doing anything which is going to make the cost of living in the Island any worse than it currently is. As a consequence of that, I certainly do not want to see water bills going up. The numbers you have quoted there have not been explained to me in depth as to how they have been arrived at and certainly the very big numbers, the triple-digit millions of pounds, I think, allude to the potential for a brand-new water treatment works, which would start from scratch in a greenfield site most likely and be put up and built to serve the entire Island and take over from Handois and Augrès as the 2 current treatment

works. My feeling is, and certainly what I read in the work of the P.F.A.S. panel, is that is not necessarily required. Jersey Water have spoken about granular activated carbon at both their treatment works and I know they are challenging sites, but I cannot see any reason myself, looking at the information I have been given, why that cannot be done. If we can utilise the 2 existing sites and just bolt on additional technology, additional process to cope with the P.F.A.S. issue, I think that is a much, much cheaper alternative than the one that has been circulated, shall I say, by Jersey Water at this time.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Probably my final question then on this area is, of course, we are only a few weeks away from the States Assembly deciding on this and of course, as you said, that you are expressing a very different view than we are seeing from Jersey Water. I am wondering how you intend to respond to Jersey Water and the concerns that they have put, whether it is the potential rise in water bills, increases, or the potential amount it will cost to build whatever facility or the technology to reach the figure of 4. How do you intend to discuss or respond to Jersey Water so that the States Assembly Members, when we are debating this, comes with the full set of information that both yourselves and Jersey Water have been ...

The Minister for the Environment:

I am not sure, Chair, that it will be for me to respond to Jersey Water's concerns in this instance, in as much as they are raising concerns to their shareholder and the shareholders are expressing those concerns to Members of Government. If we are to have a debate on the floor of the Assembly about the pros and cons of solving the P.F.A.S. issue and how much it is going to cost, it is for someone else to bring forward the cost implications. I have certainly put forward my side and I think it should really be for somebody else to bring forward the other side. The debating Chamber is set up for exactly this purpose. Let us have the argument set out on the floor of the Assembly and allow States Members to decide. But I do not think it would be for me to go away from presenting as a proposition the recommendations of the P.F.A.S. panel. If someone wants to come and challenge that, given that the panel have thought long and hard about this. The decision of 5 years and the level of 4 nanograms is not something, and I do not want to be disparaging, they have not just plucked those numbers out of thin air. There has been a huge amount of public meetings. They have had discussions with global experts around the entire world, online, for everybody to watch and see how they come to these conclusions. This is what they have proposed. This is what they have recommended. This is what I am taking forward. If somebody wants to bring a counterargument to that, I am fine. I have no problem with that whatsoever. But I think I am doing my bit of putting forward the case here. If somebody wants to bring forward another case, that is fine. Let us have an amendment. Let us get on the floor of the Assembly and discuss it. I do not know if I missed anything, Kelly.

Group Director, Regulation:

No, Minister. The P.F.A.S. panel did hear from Jersey Water in a public presentation, and it may be that Jersey Water's thinking has evolved since that presentation, but the Minister only has the material presented before him. The panel were absolutely clear that they were minded to consider the practical implications of Jersey and the 4 nanograms within 5 years they believe to be practically achievable based on global evidence in terms of the scientific backing and the evidence base, hundreds of pages of how they have arrived to that. As the Minister said, it was all debated and considered publicly online. They are all recorded and they are available, so if anyone would like recordings of those discussions and debates, then we can provide that. So I think that there is a sound evidence base for the Minister's proposition.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I had a few other questions about report 4, but I think we can leave it. As you said, Minister, we are having a specific P.F.A.S. hearing on 20th March at 2.30 p.m., and so we can go into the other recommendations that have been put forward and how the Government will respond to those and how you feel that the Government should respond to those at that hearing at the end of the month. My last question on this really is, in a formal handover to the next Minister, if you were doing a handover to the next Minister, what would that contain for the P.F.A.S. recommendations? What are the main areas that you feel that need to be focused on?

The Minister for the Environment:

Clearly, Chair, we are waiting for the final report to come out, but certainly when it comes to water, the panel have been very clear they do not see any changes now in those recommendations of 4 nanograms in 5 years. There are other recommendations which have been in interim reports, but I think until such a time as the final report comes out, it is difficult for Government to give a final opinion on those recommendations. But we know that we have already done some good work. We know there is a lot more work to do. I know we do not want to talk about necessarily getting to the hotspot at the airport. There is a lot of work to do around the west of the Island to make sure we mitigate that. There is work to do to make sure Jersey Water can abstract as much water as they can, water that is at a P.F.A.S. level that they can deal with. Then there is other recommendations about the return of solid waste from Bellozanne to agricultural land. There will be some recommendations about ongoing testing of local produce, but I was very heartened by the results that came out of the local produce testing. I have to say, I cannot stress this enough, that the 4 members of the P.F.A.S. panel are global experts. They advise other governments around the world on these issues. I am hugely grateful to them for the amount of work they have done, the effort they have put in, and for their recommendations. I know there will be some recommendations where we may have to be a little bit woolly on, but certainly on the important health ones and water levels, I will put forward what

they have recommended. As for the next Minister, there will be work to continue to do. The official Government response to the final report, which will come out at the end of this month, will be something which will have to be worked on during the course of the summer. I would expect the new Minister to present that at some point early in the next session of the States.

Group Director, Regulation:

Thank you. Just to add that, obviously, the Water Quality Safety Programme, the team will continue work during the change of Government. The Hydrogeological P.F.A.S. Steering Group will continue their work. The Government has committed to bringing more information online, in particular about private water supplies and treatment at home options. So we will bring that as a page up on gov.je in the upcoming months. So I just wanted to reassure that the work will continue with ongoing monitoring as well. Then when we move into the next Government, in terms of the new Government's priorities, if there is anything more significant, then we will take it from there.

The Minister for the Environment:

Just as a very final comment, Chair, I might just say, not only the panel that worked hard, I have got a large number of officers headed up by Kelly here who worked enormously hard. But if any members of the public, who are concerned or want to know more about P.F.A.S., there is a specific site, search for it on gov.je. It has an enormous amount of questions and answers to every question we have ever been sent and a huge amount of information there to reassure the public. Everything we have done is open and transparent. It is all online. It is all available to be downloaded, viewed, or read.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you. I think we will touch more during our specific hearing. Over to Deputy Coles.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Thank you. Minister, moving on to the area of the marine spatial plan and fisheries. Minister, following the publication of the Economic Impact Assessment, the further research report in relation to the marine protected areas and the Draft Sea Fisheries (Trawling, Netting and Dredging) (Jersey) Amendment Regulations, what is your view about the extent to which the marine spatial plan has been progressed during your time as Minister?

The Minister for the Environment:

I can say, Deputy, that, not necessarily because of me, but I am delighted with the progress that the marine spatial plan has made in the short amount of time, not least because a significant part, a really important part of it, is to do with marine protected areas, as you say. When the marine spatial plan was first published, a protected area was proposed within that, and very early on in my time as

Minister there were 2 areas which were highlighted to me which were relied on very heavily by individual fishermen, both Jersey and, in one case, a French fisherman. I decided that there were immediately decisions to be made on those 2 areas, which were grandfathered to 2030. Then I guess it is probably fair to say that things went a little bit quiet for a while and we moved ahead making some small changes for navigation to make life easier for both fishermen and marine officers, and we moved forward. Then, as we came closer to a time where we knew we were going to have to pass the proposals through the Assembly for the marine protected areas in order to come into force for September this year, the pressure started to come back on again. We were, at that point, sort of the second half of last year, in a position where we initiated new technology on to fishing boats to allow us to monitor greatly the areas that the fishing boats fished in, technology which resulted in a ping coming out of a French boat, or a Jersey boat, and on a computer chart, and available to marine officers to see where fishermen were. That was really helpful because it allowed us to analyse where boats were fishing and where they were not fishing, and it soon became apparent just by the amount of time the boats were visiting that there were certain areas which would be really seriously missed if we protected them immediately. Further to that, and only a few weeks later, the Economic Impact Assessment that you refer to was published, and that was done in Jersey for the Jersey fishing boats, and not long after that the French Government themselves issued their own financial assessment of the impact on the French fishing boats. So all of a sudden I had a lot more data available to me to show me where boats were fishing, and more importantly how much time they were spending there as a percentage of their days at sea. Then, on top of that, some information showing how much of the catch value from those particular areas. I then took the decision that I had to allow certain additional areas to be grandfathered for a further few years in order to try very hard to get to a position where we are protecting a large percentage of our seabed and our marine waters.

[14:30]

But we do it in such a way that we manage to keep the fishermen fishing and profitable during the time while we get there. So that was the difficult decision that I had to come to. I spoke to local fishermen a lot. Officers of mine went to France and visited the French fishing associations in both Brittany and Normandy and came back and reported about their concerns. In both cases, both the Jersey Fishermen's Association and especially the Normandy Fishing Association put forward proposals to me for changing areas, and I looked at them and considered them, and some of their suggestions I took on board, and some I did not. What has happened is I have issued now the final version of the marine protected areas which is now lodged for debate in the Assembly. That will show the bits that will be protected from 1st September this year, and further areas which will come in to be protected in 2030. At that time, we will have taken the Island from 6 per cent of the total marine - our territorial waters - 6 per cent protected to somewhere over 23 per cent. I would like to

think that the Minister of the day between now and 2030 will also look at further areas which could be protected as well. While I say it with one hand that 30 by 30, which is a commitment and, sort of a clique, if you like, used by many countries around the world for protecting 30 per cent of your territorial waters by 2030, it has never been a commitment that I have made. I am aware of it, and I would like to get as close to it as possible. Or I would, you know, I would recommend any Minister to try to get as close as possible.

Vice-Chair:

Of course, part of that commitment of 30 by 30 is for it to be good quality and not just any sort of water protected. Do you believe that the areas that are currently up for debate represent high quality marine areas to be protected?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, certainly the bits that we are protecting, we will be protecting in September this year, are of high quality. One of the other considerations I had to take into account when grandfathering some of these additional areas was that I charged the team 18 months ago, I said: "Look, you need to convince me, as Minister, that these areas are worthy of protection". So, they did a very large sampling and research piece of work in some areas, mainly off the east coast of Jersey, with drop cameras and taking grab samples, and other work. They came back to me with some very detailed data on the levels of maerl, which is a particular worry for us because we are obliged to protect maerl. I was able to look at the data and the levels of maerl in every one of these areas and use that data to help me decide which bits I might grandfather. So, I am very happy in myself that I am protecting the bits with the largest amount of maerl. I am aware of some other areas which we have grandfathered to 2030 where there is less maerl present, but there is still some, but those would be protected later on.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Do you mind, Minister, if I just ask a quick question about that commitment, because, you know, looking back at some of the speeches made in the States and going back to the debate on the Marine Spatial Plan, you said: "We will get there; we will get to 30 by 30". I just wondered ...

The Minister for the Environment:

Did I say that, did I?

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

You said: "We will get there, we will get there by 30 2030", and then your fellow Minister, Deputy Gorst, said: "The current Minister, as previous Minister was, is committed to the idea of 30 by 30". So, I just wondered if things have changed?

The Minister for the Environment:

Okay, I have to say then, I will put my hand up and say I cannot remember saying that, but clearly, I did. The wonders of Hansard is a fantastic thing. But I have never felt that it was important, the 30 by 30 thing, because was that important? Because I felt a bit like you have elected to, Deputy Coles, you might end up going down a road to say my overarching concern here is to get to 30 per cent. I am not going to be too bothered about how I do it. I am going to get to 30. You might end up protecting some bits which are not really worthy of protection and such. But I am very confident that the 23 per cent - the 21 per cent plus we will have in September, the 23 per cent in 2030 that we are currently proposed - are all really worthy of protection. But, as I said, there is time between now and 2030 to identify other areas, I have got some ideas myself that I might well pass on to the next Minister for the Environment, how we could do that. But I am absolutely wedded to there is no point in trying to protect something that is not worth protecting, and my worry about the 30 by 30 is that you end up saying: "Well, look, we are still a couple of per cent short, why do we not just put a box around this area out here, nothing much happens, let us just protect it", when there is nothing really very valuable there to protect in the first place. So, yes, I apologise if I - in my heart I have never really been wedded to 30 by 30, it is not the most important thing. There are far more important things to do.

Vice-Chair:

You said there you have had a couple of ideas of areas that could be protected that are not included in this up to the 23 per cent. Have you got any, would you prepared to tell anything to the panel?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, I do not want to - well, I mean, there is one I do, I can say, and that is the, as you may well know, there are two what we call bream boxes, one to the north of the Island, but just to the north-west of the Durrells; and another one to the south of the Island between La Rocque and North East Minquiers buoy, where we designate at the breeding time of the year when the bream are breeding that those are protected for a short period of time. I would like to do some research as to whether that might be something we could protect on a longer basis. So, there is 2 areas there which are quite big, and there may be some justification with doing that. It may also be that we can do some more work to identify other breeding grounds which we do not know about yet. Who knows. Technology is a wonderful thing. We have just invested in an underwater drone which is going to allow us to survey areas much more closely. So, I am confident by the time we get to 2030, the intervening years will have allowed us to identify some other areas which are very worthy of that.

Vice-Chair:

You talk about as well handing over to the next Minister, if the Sea Fisheries (Trawling, Netting and Dredging) (Jersey) Amendment Regulations are adopted, there will still be 80 of the 91 recommendations outstanding from the Marine Spatial Plan. Have you put any priority list together for the next Minister of what you think are your top priorities?

The Minister for the Environment:

I cannot say there is an absolute priority there. Certainly, the department's emphasis has concentrated very much on the marine protected areas. The challenge there, as I said previously, is making sure that we have a profitable fishing fleet all the way through these changes in the protected areas, and I would try hard to convince them that at a point in the future, we can have a territorial waters with lots, hopefully, of plentiful species for them to catch and they will not have to spend all day and night trying to make a living. But clearly the Island enjoys some absolutely spectacular and wonderful offshore reefs. There are challenges there in as much as their beauty attracts any number of tourists and recreational boaters, and always the conflict between nature and us when we are going out to visit these wonderful places. That is something that needs to be managed. I think moving forward, certainly the recreational aspect of things is something we need to keep a close eye on, whether that is fishing or whether that is interaction with wildlife. But I do not think that we should be shy of promoting ourselves when it comes to the beauty and the massive, wide variation that we have on our seashores and in our seas, and we need to look after them as best we can. I mean, Ramsar is something we have signed up to in the last couple of years. We have had a new Ramsar board and a new Ramsar working group department are doing the work now, which they did not. Officers in Marine Resources are now doing the work. Just promoting Ramsar itself, we are doing much, much better at that. You are chomping at the bit; do you want to say something?

Group Director of Natural Environment, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

I am. I am just conscious that our officers are putting together a progress report on these 91 priorities that we had outlined in the Marine Spatial Plan, which is due in April this year. So, they are working towards trying to give a bit of an understanding as to how we are getting on with those other very important areas.

The Minister for the Environment:

We always said across the Marine Spatial Plan, it is a live document. It is never, ever going to be static. We will be looking to upgrade it all the time. It is not one of these that will come back to the Assembly every 10 years for an update. We are just going to continue to update it as we go. A lot of the goals and aspirations are there, but unfortunately in many cases we have a little box at the end that says, you know, the finances to achieve them have not been identified yet. But it is all work in progress.

Vice-Chair:

You mentioned about profitability and fishermen going forward through your plan and the handover, which brings us nicely on to the Sea Fisheries (Atlantic Bluefin Tuna) (Jersey) Regulations in P.21/2026. This proposition was brought forward following a pilot scheme in 2025 where a limited number of chartered vessels were authorised for recreational catch and release tuna fishing. Can you outline what key lessons were learnt from that pilot scheme?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, we only had one vessel that went out to do the research because it was very important for us to understand more about the level of tuna, where they were, how many we thought we had, because we have, for the last 2 years, been working really hard to put forward ourselves to become a member of I.C.C.A.T. (International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas) which is the commission which regulates everything to do with Atlantic bluefin tuna, administered from Spain. We wanted to add ourselves to the U.K., if you like, to become part of the U.K. So, we have done that work. We have been to Spain. They have accepted us into the tuna scheme. So, the U.K. know that we are now recognised and we will shortly be aware of whether we are going to be allowed some quota for tuna. Certainly, the work that has been done shows that tuna are a species, especially in the north Atlantic and our side of the north Atlantic, they have been protected for a long time. Their numbers have come up to a point now where we can fish a small amount of them without having any detrimental effect. The proposition that I am taking to the States later this year just takes bluefin tuna off the Wildlife (Jersey) Law, because until quite recently, tuna has been a protected species, and obviously we cannot allow catch and release of protected species widespread. So, that proposition will take that legal hurdle away. My hope for this coming season, if we can get there in time, is that we will have a small number of fishermen, registered fishermen, who will be allowed to catch under very strict restrictions, catch a very small number of bluefin tuna to land and to sell. But also, I hope that we will be allowed also a number of permits for recreational fishermen to go out and catch and release tuna in our waters. Again, under strict regulation, certain types of equipment, and they will all have to be trained. The licence is not going to be cheap; it will be several hundred pounds. But that will only just pay for our annual subscription to I.C.C.A.T. But what you asked me, lessons we have learnt, certainly something we have learnt is that the tuna in Jersey are smaller than some of the tuna off the southwest corner of England. While they are less weight per fish, the quality of the meat is significantly better with the smaller - they are still quite large - but the smaller fish. So, I am really hopeful that with some very clever and careful management, that we can turn tuna into a very niche product, and just like octopus at the moment, we will also see some locally caught bluefin tuna on our menus in local restaurants. We are also going to have some regulation we are not going to be able to export. It would be for local only, but in this case, because we are regulated in something from the M.M.O. (Marine Management Organisation) in the U.K.,

local will include U.K. So, if we need to export the odd fish, we can do that. But there is a lot of management that is going to go into looking after this fishery. We are determined to do it absolutely properly, and I am sure that we will.

Vice-Chair:

Can you explain the difference - I mean, you mention about I.C.C.A.T. being part of Spain, the M.M.O, with the U.K. - and how that interacts with our licensing? Because you talk about issuing a licence for landing and issuing it for catch and release. Can you explain the differences between all these and how they interact?

The Minister for the Environment:

This is where I feared we might end up, and my Fisheries Officer - I am not even sure if the Director is going to know the answer.

Group Director of Natural Environment, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

Well, it is complex. I think of the, like, in terms of lessons learned, trying to establish a tuna fishery, be that catch and release or catch to kill, is an extremely complex business. It requires an awful lot of paying very strict attention to existing rules, and those rules are set out by I.C.C.A.T. which is the overarching governing body that then allows us to even consider. We have to provide evidence into I.C.C.A.T. for them to scrutinise us, to make sure that the activities that we are proposing, the legal background that we have in the Island, is sufficient to uphold standards which are extremely high in terms of animal welfare in the catch but also making sure that we do not abuse that catch.

[14:45]

So, that is the I.C.C.A.T. link with Jersey.

The Minister for the Environment:

But when it comes to the allocation of quota, just to be clear, I.C.C.A.T. in Spain hold the total quota. They will issue a quota to the U.K. The U.K. will then issue part, they will divvy it up, if you like, to the devolved powers, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and now that we are signed up, they will also, hopefully, issue some to Jersey. There is some discussion to be had as to how that will happen. So, we will get a quota of however many kilograms of fish that can be caught and landed. We will also get an allocation of a number of licenses that we can use to issue to recreational fishermen to catch and release.

Vice-Chair:

But these licenses are going to be issued then by Jersey, to Jersey fishermen in Jersey waters?

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes. The licenses will be - there will be a number of licenses, I am thinking at my end.

Group Director of Natural Environment, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

Yes, and a tonnage / kilogrammage.

The Minister for the Environment:

It will be up to us to issue them to what have you. At the moment, how the quota for catch and kill is administered is still in discussion with the U.K. My hope will be that the U.K. will issue it to myself or the department, and we will allocate it to specific fishermen in the Jersey fleet.

Chair:

So, the catch and release is kind of a bit more worked out than, say, the catch and kill?

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, we are still waiting for the final version from the U.K. of what they intend to do with the quota they have been allocated and how they are going to allocate it to the devolved administrations. But I can say, like I say, in both instances, both recreational and commercial, there is going to be a charge for the licenses and both will be administered with some really strict rules and regulations about how you catch these fish, what you do with them when you have caught them, most especially for the recreational so they can be returned live, and for the commercial so that the fish can be treated properly so that when they are landed on the quay, the meat is of the highest quality.

Vice-Chair:

Of course, in there then we come about the compliance with food safety and processing standards. Have you been working through that to make sure that the high value, high, good quality tuna is ...?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well certainly there will be through the Food Safety (Jersey) Law there will be some strict requirements on what happens to the fish when it lands, but what I can report to you, Chair, and the panel is that the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development and myself have been working hard. We have identified some funds, and we have now started a project which we have engaged somebody to take on for us, to look at the future of fishing, fish marketing and fishing in Jersey, and how we move that forward. This person is going to come on Island and talk to all of our fishermen, do a lot of research. They are already very experienced in this realm of work. We hope they will be making recommendations to us in not too many months ahead with how we might develop the fishery product, how we might change the marketing, how we might diversify the industry for the benefit,

not just of the Island but especially the fishing fleet itself. I am sure there is going to be some recommendations in there for some infrastructure. There will be some recommendations to spend some money. But it will certainly give us a blueprint which we can hopefully give some confidence to the fleet to say this is how we think we should be moving forward, this is the markets we think we should target, this is the infrastructure we think we are going to need in order to be able to provide the type of product that people look for.

Chair:

Will we get this report before the end of the term? I mean, will you get that?

The Minister for the Environment:

No, we will not. It is work that I think it is going to be ongoing over the course of the summer, and I would think the new Ministers will be in position to publish, you know, early in the autumn.

Vice-Chair:

The panel notes that: "All sellers will be registered through a mandatory electronic catch documentation scheme which ensures the highest levels of traceability for each individual fish". How has this documentation scheme been developed?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, you are not talking to the right person here, but I can tell you that there will be devices on all the boats, so we will know where the boats have been and the boats - the fish will be allocated numbers. I am not sure, I know the way it will work, you know, that every fish that will be landed will be documented. A bit like it is now with the app that we have for fishermen to record their landings.

Group Director of Natural Environment, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

Catch App.

The Minister for the Environment:

In the case of tuna, you know, it is going to be even more specific as they fish, and it will be traceable all the way through, so we know exactly where it has gone. But I am not sure of the ...

Group Director of Natural Environment, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

Catch to plate, essentially, is the plan.

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes. I will ask the senior officers in Marine Resources to get back to you on that one.

Vice-Chair:

Okay. I suppose my last question is going to come down to what financial or practical support, if any, has been provided to local vessels wishing to enter the commercial market, particularly given the investment requirement and compliance process for tuna?

The Minister for the Environment:

For tuna?

Vice-Chair:

Yes.

The Minister for the Environment:

Okay. Well, when we know how the quota for catch and kill is going to be distributed, it will be very much easier to answer that question. Well, let us just assume for a minute that there are 4 boats that apply and are granted. There would be some very specific requirements that the boats will have to fulfil in order to be given a licence. As I said before, we are going to want to know, because they will already have the tracking technology on the boat anyway, but they will have to catch these fish with very specific rods and reels so that the fish can be reeled in with the least amount of hassle. We do not want, you know, we do not want fish being played at sea for the enjoyment of that. The fish have got to be landed very quickly. They have got to be put into very cold conditions, and they have got to be, I believe, they have probably got to be bled as well.

Group Director of Natural Environment, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

Bled and then stored, yes.

The Minister for the Environment:

There is a number of things that they will have to do. In order for the fishermen to understand what they have got to do, they will have to undergo a training course. We will be bringing somebody into the Island to run that, and those fishermen will have to attend. They will have to show that they are competent and understand what they have been taught. They will, I would imagine in the first instances, be very heavily monitored when they come to land, or it maybe even that officers are on board when these first fish are caught. But I cannot impress upon the panel enough the importance of this fishery to us. We have put a huge amount of work into getting where we are and we are not going to do anything which is going to jeopardise. We want to be seen as a jurisdiction that takes marine resources really seriously. We have got a great team. We already have the best managed bass fishery in Europe, and we want to do more like that. It is incumbent upon us to make sure that the people who go out and prosecute these tuna for catch and kill do it absolutely properly. We want to hold ourselves up as the best.

Group Director of Natural Environment, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

Not only that, we need to be seen to be the best, essentially, by external viewing bodies. There will be a lot of scrutiny on us as this fishery opens to make sure that we are complying with the obligations that we have, that we have told I.C.C.A.T. particularly, and D.E.F.R.A. (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), that we will stick to.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Minister, we are going to move on to the Planning and Building (Jersey) Law and the Bridging Island Plan. We will start with your most recent amendment to the law, that is to be debated on 24th March. The panel understands that this is to reinstate, in essence, the ability to revise plans and to set the procedures for new plans, but could you go into a bit of detail as to why the legal amendment is proposed in the way it is, and in particular why it is different to how revisions were done in the past? What was the intent in creating a new version of how to bring about revisions, and is there any intent behind that?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, I am going to look to my left, because I am not particularly aware of the way things were done specifically in the past, but certainly, from my perspective, I was part of the Assembly that changed and brought the new Covid rules so that we could have the last Bridging Island Plan debate. But it was absolutely clear to me from that time that, you know, removing the ability to debate as single policy of the Island Plan was - I am not really quite sure if I am thinking back why it was done in that way, but certainly it was important for me as part of the planning reform programme to bring that back in. I think, as we know, most Island plans are for 10-year periods. Sometimes that will stretch over to 11 or 12, but certainly a minimum of 10. When you look around the globe at things that might happen or changes that might happen, I think it is absolutely essential that the Island Plan or a single policy in the plan can be debated and changed within that 10-year period. How crazy would it be to be 2 or 3 years into a plan and find something very dramatic changes that we need to change the policy on how housing, or we need to change the policy on whatever? So, I think that is a very sensible and pragmatic thing to be doing. I am not aware that the wording of the proposition to go back to debate a single policy, is it very different to the way it was phrased previously, Kevin?

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

I think it is a bit more explicit now. So, it is really explicit on the face of the law, that the Minister has got that ability. I think if you look at previous iterations of the Planning and Building (Jersey) Law that ability was almost implied rather than being very explicit. So, I think the phrasing of the proposition that the Minister has lodged just makes it very clear that the Minister has got that ability to amend the plan in part. You will be aware from having looked at the proposition that the

proposition also proposes to give the States powers to make regulations about how those changes to a plan in parts might be made. The Minister has prepared some proposals looking at how that might be done. So, clearly Members will be aware that when we review a plan at the moment, we have to go through extensive processes of public consultation, independent examination, and then come back to the States for approval. That is, of itself, quite an extensive process.

The Minister for the Environment:

An expensive process as well, I might add.

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

That is right.

The Minister for the Environment:

I mean, I think the cost now of going through an Island Plan review is probably well over £1 million, which is funds that have to be found from outside of the department because we, you know, it is an extraordinary expense and not something that happens on a regular basis. So, one of the first jobs of the new Government will be to see if they want a new Island Plan, and I expect they will - I would hope they will. But the second question which comes hot on the heels is, okay, well you are going to have to find £1 million upwards to fund that work. But one of the answers to less funding would be to maybe have a different Island Plan process, come to conclusions in a different way maybe cheaper, or not have such an extensive plan.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

So, I think that is where I am interested is the idea of the changes is not only to future proof the law for a new Island Plan, but it is about how does a Minister review it, and my reading of the amendment is it creates a regulation making power which would be where one defines the process in which the Minister does this. The key change compared to the pre-Covid law, when it was last amended in 2019, was any change would have to come back to the States under the previous Article 3(2). So, it is trying to understand - it sounds like there are some proposals that have been drafted. Where are those and can you share, kind of, what the plan is for how you might revise the Island Plan given you have created, and are hoping will be accepted, the high-level law that would provide that power?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, I expect probably now that you have mentioned it, Deputy, during the debate, it might be incumbent upon me to explain a few of the options. But certainly, there are many different ways that we might come to an Island Plan debate, and I think what we want to do in changing the legislation is to give ourselves the flexibility to do whatever we felt was best at the time. I do not know if you want to expand that anymore, Kevin? But, I mean, we have looked at the options of a dual plan

where you have a big, overarching plan which does not get revised very often, and a lower level, more specific plan that is revised more frequently. I think we sort of decided that we want to stick where we are really. I think we find there is no point in changing something if it is working well and I think the current system probably works well enough, with some tweaks. Is there anything you need to add there?

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

I think the only thing I would add, and as the Minister suggested, you know, he might seek to highlight some of these issues during the debate on the, sort of, enabling legislation, if you like, but in the interest of efficiency and effectiveness, and being able to make changes in a way that is proportionate to the nature of the change, it might be that the processes that are operated are different, depending on the nature of the change. So, for example, if there is a significant change proposed to part of the plan, it may be that requires approval of the States Assembly still, still requires extensive consultation. It may also require independent examination and then go back to the Assembly. If the change is relatively minor, it may not necessarily have to follow that route.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Does that mean, perhaps, that it would not have to come to the States Assembly at all, it sounds like you are implying?

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

Yes, that could be the case. But clearly, that would be up to the Assembly to decide.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

At the point of regulation making, is it?

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

Yes, that is right. So, the way that the proposed change is constructed at the moment is that you have those provisions in the law, as proposed to be debated on 24th March, would enable the States to make regulations about how those Island Plan review processes would operate. So, that panel would sit with the Assembly. But those regulations would need to be drafted and then brought back to the Assembly for the Assembly to consider.

The Minister for the Environment:

I think the important point is nothing gets decided without the assent of the Assembly.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Through regulation?

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

Yes, that is right.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Given that you might talk about where your view would be, albeit we are reaching the end of a term, has there been any consultation on what that kind of workstream would be, you know, to create different ways to revise the Island Plan? So, there was consultation in July with the public, has anything else happened since?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, certainly we have discussed it among ourselves of the different options that we might go down. I am aware that we have specifically, at this time, gone out to the public with too many various options.

[15:00]

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

No. The Minister has established the Development Industry Partnership Board, which obviously represents various interests involved in the planning and development world. So, we have taken informal soundings from the Development Industry Partnership Board, but clearly, you know, in terms of developing those regulations and bringing them back to the Assembly, the Minister may choose to consult on them more widely before they are brought back to the Assembly for consideration.

The Minister for the Environment:

Certainly, there has been a lot of pressure on trying to achieve a lot of things in a short period of time, but one of the things I was absolutely determined to do was to bring forward this particular regulation about debating a part of the Island plan in isolation from the others. This bit we are discussing now about how we might change the way we do the Island plan just added on to that nicely. But we have not had the time to do the consultation on that second part that we might have done if we had more time. That will come and the new Minister will have to look at that and decide how they move forward.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Okay. But ultimately, policy wise, we will have to wait until the regulations are presented and the Minister of the day will be the policy lead. You are not starting any work beyond anything you have done now to direct where work would go in the interim.

The Minister for the Environment:

No, absolutely not.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Okay. They will.

The Minister for the Environment:

The new Minister will have to pick that up. I just thought it was important that the new Minister had some way of doing this without going back to the Assembly immediately, so we are changing those rules. The new Minister can start in that position and move forward from there.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Okay.

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

I think at this stage, we are just raising the principles that we would look to do something that is potentially more efficient and effective, depending on the nature of the change. But clearly the decision whether to approve any changes to those processes would rest with the Assembly.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

In regulations. Okay. Looking to other areas of policy in planning and building, the Assembly approved P.54 last year in October, which was supplementary planning guidance on parking. We were looking to have an update on how that work is going.

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, I am going to have to say I do not think it is going anywhere at the moment. Purely because we have got so much work to do before the election. But I have given the commitment that ... we had the debate on parking and it was clear to me the mood of the Assembly was in a certain direction. I felt that it was important to signal, not only to the Assembly but to the industry, that we would look at this again. We would not look at certain parts of it; we would look at the whole thing. I do not know when it is down for the work to start but it will be started, probably during purdah. The new Assembly, the new Minister will be in the position to push the button on that one and say: "Right, we need to get out there and ..." I think we know what a lot of people are going to say but I think we need to do the work. It is very unusual to have a policy, or guidance in this case, brought in and then get reviewed again in such a short order. But it is very clear from comments from parish constables, parish roads authorities, from the Planning Committee and also from residents that there is much concern about the level of parking requirements in some of these housing schemes that we

have approved. That is brought about by housing schemes which have been built out and then we find there is a lot of parking happening in places that never happened before, some of it illegal. It does give country parishes a big headache when a significant number of cars suddenly need to be parked somewhere in the area of a parish village. We are mindful of that. We think we probably need ... we will have a look and see. Having said that, the reason that we have done what we have done with parking standards is very specific. We want more people to use alternative transport, active travel. Cycling, walking, public transport. We would like them to think about shared mobility and maybe having less cars. On the other hand, of course, we know how Jersey people love their cars. I am no different from everybody else. We all like our cars and getting people to change tack on anything to do with vehicles is challenging.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Minister, just on that - because it is something that has been in the news recently and you have mentioned it - about sustainable transport. Have you talked with the Minister for Infrastructure about the increase in bus fares that we have seen? It is quite a big increase to the point that potentially it is quite expensive to take the bus on a return journey versus parking in town. Whether you have talked to the Minister for Infrastructure about that. You both obviously hold those pieces.

The Minister for the Environment:

I can say that I have not spoken to the Minister about the increases. I cannot say I was overly aware of that. Is this something that has come in very recently?

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Yes.

The Minister for the Environment:

Okay. I will need to speak to him about that. I have always advocated from the Minister of the Environment's point of view, when it comes to sustainable transport and trying to have less congestion and burn less carbon, we really need to encourage people on public transport. We do that in a number of different ways but one of them is not increasing the charges that buses charge. Certainly increasing the cost of parking would be one. Making it easier for buses to travel. I think we are seeing the new bus lane going in at the end of Gloucester Street, which will mean that buses can move around even more quickly. But we will have to, in the next session of Government. This phase 2 of carbon saving from 2026 to 2030 will involve a whole new raft of initiatives, if I can call them that, to try to save carbon. Clearly, saving carbon ... people need to walk, they need to cycle, they need to go on public transport or they need to drive electric vehicles. Electric vehicles do not change congestion but certainly they save carbon.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

But it is difficult when you have got a round trip of more than £5 for a bus.

The Minister for the Environment:

I accept that. It is still cheaper than using a car but sometimes that is a message. That is a bit of education that we probably need to work harder on. The cost of running an internal combustion engine vehicle, cost of insuring, cost of parking, all this sort of thing. When you actually do the sums and add up to how much that costs you a day, it is not an inconsiderable amount of money. So I think there are plenty of advantages to travelling on bus. Of course, people need to be close enough to a bus stop. The timetable needs to be at a time which suits people to travel. So, work to do. We have a nice new fleet of buses. In many ways, it would have been nice if they had been electric buses but I know that one needs to balance the enormous cost of electric buses with the ...

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

The cost of buses would perhaps be ... when looking at sustainable transport on those newly zoned houses or those who are living outside ... just to pick up your commitment that policy time is going to be set during purdah to give the next Minister the blue touch paper to have policy options on parking standards. Just to further confirm, you mentioned that that would include the standards around the re-zoned sites perhaps. Notwithstanding that P.54 was purely about one parking space per unit, that you are going to have guided policy work undertaken to review the parking standards at those newly zoned sites as well, which have, as you have mentioned and raised.

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, yes. I think the important thing to say is I am bringing this to change; I am looking to review. Whoever the Minister is will have the information at their disposal to decide whether they want to make a change to the guidance. Clearly, we made a case when we put that guidance together. Where we said houses should have one parking space only, it is where we ideally wanted those houses to be close to amenities. So your parish hall and your school and your supermarket and all that sort of thing, so you could walk or cycle. But I accept that at Zion maybe, for example, we do not have all the ... you are certainly on a good bus route and it is close to a supermarket and garage, but there are other things. Certainly transport to school is a challenge from Zion, where whichever school your child might be going to, it will involve sort of ...

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

But at a high level, that work is going to be undertaken as some of the pre-election time and it will not be constrained to St. Helier. It will be about a review on parking for the Island.

The Minister for the Environment:

This is exactly right. As you say, Deputy, the proposition came to the Assembly with very much more focus on St. Helier. But despite my attempts to persuade members not to talk about the wider parking standards or the wider Island, it was very difficult for me to do that.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

To separate it.

The Minister for the Environment:

It became very apparent that a lot of Members were unhappy about the standards generally.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

That is okay.

The Minister for the Environment:

That is where I said: "Rather than just do a specific piece of work, I would like the whole piece reviewed".

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Great. I just wanted to know that was on so we could keep track of that and anyone listening can. A couple more quick sections from me. An update, ideally, on the West of Island Planning Framework, noting that we heard in the last quarterly hearing that terms of reference were being prepared.

The Minister for the Environment:

I will look to Kevin, but I want to assure anybody who is listening in that I think it is a really important piece of work. It needs to be done. It will get done. I have given that commitment. I think there is a lot of opportunities on the West of the Island that we need to look at, we need to consult properly, we need to really do a good job. I do not know if it is going to involve some off-Island expertise coming in to help us with that. Officers are pretty constrained to the amount of time they are going to have.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Have we outlined where we are yet? Have we got terms of reference for it?

The Minister for the Environment:

I do not know. I am looking at Kevin.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

I am looking for an update, ideally.

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

We have not got any definitive terms of reference yet. We have been working to prepare those for the Minister. I think it is also important to talk to local Members as well to get their engagement in those terms of reference. Given where we are relative to election, that may be something that is picked up by the new administration.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Is it unlikely that the current Minister will be able to sign those to get some work going during the pre-election, especially if work is coming in off Island? I am just trying to picture timelines for those interested in that.

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

I think there are some challenges there for the Minister. Clearly, in the sense that if a new set of terms of reference are set with current Members, if there is any change in political direction, then the new Minister may wish to then review those once in office. There is a critical decision to take there.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Okay.

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

I think the Minister also identified an additional point around the nature of the work and how that work is procured is a challenge also. So setting the terms of reference in terms of what that work is going to do, we will need to be cognisant of our ability to deliver on that.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Okay.

The Minister for the Environment:

I think in time past, this type of work, we would have taken on board inside the department but always in the knowledge that we would have employed a consultant to come out and help us with that. That is one of the ways we manage to get through so much stuff during the session. Obviously, the constraints around consultants may or may not still be there. We will have to see.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Last from me on regular planning service performance and also where you keep your ear to the ground with the Industry Partnership Board. What are you hearing as the latest trends coming in from the Industry Partnership Board that are reporting the context of planning and development from the industry? Is there anything about pipeline development costs that you are taking into consideration from how they meet?

The Minister for the Environment:

I went to Industry Partnership Board for the second time most recently not that many weeks ago. Kevin, remind me. It might be 4 - 5 weeks. We had as ever a really good meeting, a really constructive meeting where they are not afraid to put some challenges to me. Kevin came with me. I do not know that we heard anything very specifically. You might have to remind me, Kevin. Other than that times are challenging. You only need to look around town at some of the sites which are not being developed, which have started, where the demolition has taken place and they are not carrying on. That times are difficult. The cost of money is one item, the cost of materials is another, demand is a third. Cost of living is something that ... we can see the number of units which are moving through the Hall of Court and the values. It is all monitored. So we know that this is not the COVID period where people have ...

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

So what are we hearing from the Partnership Board on demand? In particular, Stats Jersey just recently published their household projections which show that even under mid-range circumstances, assuming there is no latent supply or vacant supply in the market, we would be looking at about 170 new homes per year, with a level of net migration. Are you hearing that actually the supply is not required?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, I certainly have not heard anything from the Board since those numbers were released by the stats unit. I looked at them very quickly and fired off an email to Kevin. Our population and where we go with population is a very, very interesting discussion to be had. I looked at those statistics and saw the projection out into the late part of the century where we are going to be back down to below 100,000 people living on the Island.

[15:15]

At the same time, while the population is contracting, they see a demand for an increasing number of units because people are living on their own a lot more for a whole raft of various reasons. I will have to say, I would like to be more up to speed on the demand for property at the moment on the Island. It is obviously not my specific portfolio; it would be for the Minister for Housing. But there

does appear to be lots of property for sale. We can see by the sales values that demand is not quite where it would be. At the same time, obviously there is a lot of affordable housing and social housing coming on to the market. Yes, it is interesting, it is an interesting one. When you look around and see sites that are not being built at the moment. Kelly.

Group Director, Regulation, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

Just to remind you, Minister, that you will be publishing this month your planning performance report, as well as the number of houses that were constructed last year and the number of planning permissions.

The Minister for the Environment:

Okay.

Group Director, Regulation, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

That may give an indication in terms of some of the construction.

The Minister for the Environment:

If you want me to say ...

Group Director, Regulation, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

There is the traffic and there is also the Industry Partnership Board Annual Report that has been published online as well, so we can point to those shortly.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

We will have to move on but I will finish on those statistics and just try and see, will you be publishing statistics or are they live now, either with read or without on the total builds since the last census, so that we will know roughly, as close as can be, the delta on what is being delivered and, therefore, have an up-to-date idea of we can sum the 2, basically new units ...

Group Director, Regulation, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

We will be issuing a planning performance report on the previous year, so 2025 and in terms of separate statistics for longer-term trends; that will have to be dealt with separately. The planning performance report in the next month will be for 2025.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Just have 2025, okay, that is great.

The Minister for the Environment:

We are going back to the Island Plan and the ability to devote a single policy. The population itself is an interesting one, just before the last Island Plan came out we were using numbers of plus 8, more than 800 a year people coming on to the Island that drove the demand and the number of rezoned sites that we needed to look at in the Island Plan debate sooner than the ink is dry. We see a change in the demands from the population, which is in some ways been really helpful because it has allowed us to extend the length of this Bridging Island Plan further than it was predicted, mainly because the housing demand is not quite there the way we thought it was. The rezoned sites are going to be sufficient for the immediate short term, which allows us a couple of years to get out to develop the next plan.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Okay.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you. Moving to the Connétable now.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Yes, a few questions on the Carbon Neutral Roadmap. We are talking about reports, the panel is aware that the Climate Council's comprehensive evidence report on the Carbon Neutral Roadmap is due to be presented imminently. Given limited time remaining in this political term, can you please outline, Minister, how or when you intend to form a response report and what actions that the next panel should expect from Government once it is published?

The Minister for the Environment:

Thank you, Constable. As I think we all know and as I have mentioned, the report has been published, I have it in front of me here; it is an extensive document. I met with the members of that council some months ago and I cannot tell you how impressed I was with the quality of them. Chair, this is a joint initiative, if you like, the 2 of us went out and met the panel and we have also sat down with them and had them explain where they are. In some ways it puts me in a tricky situation. One week I am in the States Assembly telling the Assembly how I do not think we should enforce the phasing out of used vehicles in 2030. But within a matter of days I am going to be publishing a report for the Assembly to look at, which says that despite us being in a good place and working really hard and we are not doing well enough to meet our commitments to Paris and meet the targets that we have set ourselves for 2030. I was listening to Radio 4 on the way to work this morning quite early and, again, I am hearing all the time about the financial challenges to climate change and the costs involved in trying to save carbon and it is a real challenge. They have a number of recommendations here; I am not going to go through all of them. But I have made comments on very many of them but they have suggested ways of doing better and it is going to be incumbent

upon me to have a look at these in a bit more detail and decide which are best to follow. The next Minister will have to do likewise but they talk about ways to dividing sets by looking at the number of tonnes of carbon that we save. There is an interesting one here on the integration of aviation and maritime emissions. I know we have started to do some work with Ports of Jersey on that. But maritime is not somewhere we have chosen to go previously. It is only a very small sector. One would have to decide whether it was worthwhile. But fuel taxation, transitional fuels, insulation, the use of biofuels is another one they want us to look at and they ...

The Connétable of St. Mary:

I am sorry, I do not wish to interrupt you, Minister. I was more concerned about, is your formal response going to come from you on all these matters and when?

The Minister for the Environment:

Absolutely. Yes, we commissioned the council, again, a bit like the P.F.A.S. panel. These council members are really, really, really top people. We have asked them to come up with a piece of work and they have done. It is 100 and something pages, it is an extensive document full of all top quality and we will have to respond. The team will be putting that response together, whether it will be me or the next Minister I am not sure.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

That is what we want to try to arrive at, is it going to be during this term and ...

The Minister for the Environment:

It will depend.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Will you be presenting it next week as a statement within the States sitting or the 24th? Will there be an official presentation?

The Minister for the Environment:

I am not sure that we are quite ready to present it as an R for the next sitting. It may well be the last sitting and we will use it to fill up the 2 weeks. But, no, I should not joke about it, it is a really, really good piece of work; I know you have seen it, Chair, and they give us a lot of ideas. I know officers are meeting with the council again very soon. I think the idea of that meeting will be for us and officers and the council to discuss recommendations and how the next Government might move forward with some of these ideas that are in this report.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Going back to my original point, I think what we are really trying to get at is, will the current Parliament receive a report from you, if not in detail but at least the way you are ...

The Minister for the Environment:

I cannot see any reason why this report cannot be published as an R and it certainly would be my intention to do that or I would hope to do it. I would not want to make too big a statement, if you like. This Climate Council have come out with this work, it is really good work, Members should see it and I expect they will see it. If I can get it published for next week I will do that certainly. I think it will be incumbent on the next Government though to take on the work that officers will do as a final piece of work with the council. But, as I say, officers are going to talk to them about how we might implement some of their great work.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Okay. I might come back to you on a couple of points on that later. Moving on to a similar point, we had correspondence from a member of the public regarding vehicle emissions duty charged to individuals importing a motorhome, it is a fairly specific item I know, in addition to G.S.T. (Goods and Services Tax). Are you able to provide additional context and rationale for the rates of the V.E.D. (Vehicle Emissions Duty) charged for such homes?

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, Constable. I have had a number of emails, I would not say a flurry recently, I would just say a consistent number of emails over the 2 years about motorhomes. While I am not going to announce anything specific for motorhomes, I would say that I think certainly the next Minister when it comes to the next phase of saving carbon the Carbon Neutral Roadmap is going to have to look at emissions duty and V.R.D. (Vehicle Registration Duty) and all this sort of thing, as ways to try to encourage people to make choices. Vehicle Emissions Duty sits with the Minister for Treasury and Resources. It is a joint effort, if you like. But one of the difficulties, one of the challenges that will have to be taken up in this next phase is to be a bit more specific about, for example, hybrid vehicles. We know that hybrid comes in a multitude of different types of vehicles. Some are really petrol engines that are driving electric motors, others are very much battery orientated with a very small add on. Again, we will need to look at other vehicles which charge V.E.D. and maybe changing the banding. But I am conscious that some of the more generalised banding affects people like motorhomes but ...

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Okay. The policy regarding motorhomes generally, are there considerations as to whether motorhomes have primary use in Jersey or off Island? Is there a deterrent effect there?

The Minister for the Environment:

It is a very interesting question, Constable. It is my understanding that caravans and motorhomes were legislated for many years ago when we made a conscious decision that we did not want the Island to have caravan parks for tourists or what have you. But we needed to make sure that individual Islanders could have a caravan to take on holiday. Legislation was put in place which allowed them to take their caravan from their home to the port, go and come back. I think I am right in saying that you were not allowed officially to see the caravan from the road, so we did not end up with storage issues. Then of course motorhomes came along and then some people decided that their motorhomes were small enough that they could drive it to work. They could use it for holiday but in the non-holiday time it was a vehicle they could use for doing their normal day-to-day living. Then of course as you will be aware, it does not affect St. Mary so much but in the west of the Island we had issues with people overnight staying or staying for a week in certain parts of St. Peter, St. Brelade. This whole thing about motorhomes but it may be time that it was all revisited. But, Kelly, do you remember anything about motorhomes and circulation within the Island? Because I think strictly, according to the law, you are not allowed them, is that right, you are not allowed to circulate? You may well know more but ...

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Can I quickly ask, I think the concern is about why V.E.D. is charged and the principle behind why V.E.D. is charged? We know Islanders are facing down the barrel of about £12,500 to import a motorhome now under the current V.E.D. rates. It is about that consideration as to the impact. At the principle level what the policy impact of V.E.D. is there for and whether it is matching and suiting motorhomes. The specific question there was about the context that on the Island, apart from running the engine once down the 5-mile road at 40 miles an hour, they have done 150 miles in the Island in a year.

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes. As I say, there is other vehicles that fall into very similar circumstances. Some vehicles get imported on to the Island and are not driven at all, not very many of those. But certainly many vehicles do get imported and not driven very much. But emissions are emissions. It may well be, as we reduce carbon and sell less petrol and a lot less diesel, Treasury are going to have to find ways of replacing that income. It may well be at that point that like the U.K. maybe they will look at a mileage charge. I am not really sure that would work in Jersey where our mileages are very low. But they will have to come up with different ways of replacing the fuel duty and at that time we may well come up with something. But it is going to be really difficult to find a solution, one size fits all is not going to work very well.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Okay, we'll leave that there, thank you.

The Minister for the Environment:

Okay.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Going on to the general question about used petrol and diesel cars and you may say this will come out in your forthcoming statement that the panel understands the decision to reverse plans to phase out used petrol and diesel cars, following responses to the public consultation on the matter in November 2025, and I quote: "Key choices are about how we best reflect and formalise U.K.'s planned phase out will need to be made." What are your own views, Minister, about the alternative options available to Jersey to meet the goals within the Carbon Neutral Roadmap if used petrol and diesel vehicle importation is still permitted?

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, thank you, Constable. I think when the roadmap came into being the world was in a different place, certainly our views of electric vehicles were different. The moves for climate change were very much more heavily driven. It seems that globally from a European perspective, U.K. perspective, is a lot more challenge to some of the climate change aspirations that we made and the way we would use carbon.

[15:30]

I get reminded frequently of the 2 words just transition and I did use it in the States Assembly. I said one of the reasons I have decided to remove the used car element of vehicles coming in new to the Island, one of the main reasons was around affordability for Islanders moving forward and 2030 is not very far away. I am conscious that electric vehicles are generally still quite expensive. I just wanted to make sure that Islanders have some sort of choice; that was the first justification. The other justification was a little bit more commercial inasmuch as most garages that sell vehicles sell used vehicles and new vehicles. In many instances used vehicles are a larger percentage of their turnover than new. When we look at importing because we know that stacks up because more used vehicles come into the Island than new vehicles. I thought there was a consideration there as well where we might have, for example, found that we had lost garages because they could not access used vehicles from the U.K. anymore. That, in turn, might mean that some marques did not have an outlet for new vehicles. There was a lot to consider in there, not least of course the reaction of the public. We had an extensive consultation then to over 2,000 responses. The vast majority of those responses said that they were opposed to phasing out used vehicle importations in 2030. I made that early decision; I have made the announcement so that the industry and the general public

have some certainty. I will go on to make - once I have had a chance to look at the detail of the responses to the consultation - an announcement about the other parts, which is new vehicles and other aspects of that. Because it may well be that I take the view that phasing out vehicles coming on to the Island in legislation is not the way we would choose to tackle climate change.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Minister, in that regard I think you are putting out some big hints there in both when you were in the States sitting but also just now about the direction you are, potentially, taking with this. But would you be coming with alternatives? Because of course transport is the biggest emitter within the Carbon Neutral Roadmap. Of course if you are inclined to go the way of not looking at anything related to transport with vehicle phase out, what would the alternative be? Because of course we are still stuck with that quite high number of the transport emissions ...

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, you are quite right, Chair. I did say I am absolutely conscious of the time resource and the financial resource in developing some of this legislation that would be required to phase out the importation and whether that was the right thing to do because people still need to have choice. Having said that, I think it is really important that we try to influence behaviour when it comes to climate change and reducing carbon and carbon-emitting vehicles. At the moment we have already spoken about emissions duty and I think that it may well be that we need to evolve that system further. As you well know, we have a number of bands and we are charging that levy in addition to the purchase price and the freight price on the amount of the levy changes, depending on the emissions of the vehicle. I think we can go further ...

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

But will you be putting specific recommendations forward? Because of course it is the end of the term and if you make big statements around quite a big chunk of the Carbon Neutral Roadmap, it will be very difficult for the next Minister to take any forward or make changes accordingly in that what they think should be ...

The Minister for the Environment:

It may well be. Any new Minister may take a very different view to myself but they will have the consultation to refer to. They will also have all the evidence that I have at my disposal to refer to as well. But I would certainly be saying to them and it may well be that I will allude to it further when I make my final statement, that I think some of the tools we have in our toolbox currently can be used to influence driver behaviour, purchase behaviour further still. I have spoken about the definition of hybrids. I think the hybrid definition is very generalised; I think we need to be a lot more specific. I think we need to be even more specific about the amount of carbon that vehicles emit. I think we

can drive or encourage behaviour in certain directions through vehicle emissions duty as one idea. But there may well be the opportunity to change to other types of duty, not just on emissions but maybe on the size of the vehicle, the weight of the vehicle, who knows? There may be a number of options. The U.K. are committed to electric vehicle. They have policies in place already that say that internal combustion engine vehicles will not be produced at a certain time. That may well change and, depending on the Government of the day, they have gone in and out of dates and changed dates. We have to remember that in the U.K. there is a requirement for car manufacturers to sell a minimum of 20 per cent electric vehicles and if they do not they are fined. Those targets and aspirations will increase and that will have a direct effect on what happens in Jersey. That is the other thing I really want to say is I think this work has led me to believe certainly that it is the manufacturers and the restrictions, rules, regulations, whatever you want to call them, brought in by the U.K. Government have a direct effect on what happens in Jersey. We could spend a lot of time and a lot of money demanding legislation which will do very little because the decisions taken in the U.K. will affect us indirectly.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Following on the Chair's question and just respond to your original response, I take it you are going to cover some of these items in your final report. From what you say also they will be your views but you leave it to the next Minister to take them forward.

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, Constable. It would be nice to be in a position to have another 6 months to develop some of the stuff further and certainly the work of the Climate Council would be something I would really like to take on. At any handover from one Minister to the next there will be a number of pieces of work which are going to have to be taken on. Maybe it is not such a bad time, we know that 2026 is what we call a transition year which has allowed us move from the first phase of saving carbon to the second phase, which runs from 2027 to 2030. The new Minister of the day is going to have a 6-month lead into the start of 2027 and come up with some ideas for how the carbon saving can work in this phase 2.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Which I understand, Minister, but would it not be very difficult for a future Minister to be able to give their support around trying to reduce that big chunk of transport emissions if you roll back quite a big chunk of the Carbon Neutral Roadmap? You have done used already, you are saying, no, it is not but we are getting big hints that you, potentially, will do this for new as well, which means that that is a big chunk of the Carbon Neutral Roadmap will basically fall away. It is something the States Assembly had agreed to before 2022 with that in there. Do you not believe that it gives the new

Minister quite a difficult place to start from if that rollback has already happened just at the end of your political term?

The Minister for the Environment:

In some ways I suppose a new Minister might look back and say: "I am disappointed I did not get this opportunity to make the decision myself." But certainly I would not want that new Minister to think that I had made a decision which was rolling back. Certainly, I am changing the policy, if the decision was to phase out new vehicles new to the Island in 2030, yes, I am changing that. But that was a decision taken to get us to point A. I think we can get to point A by a different route. The U.K. are committed to banning the production of petrol and diesel vehicles in 2030, that means you are not going to be able to buy them because they are not going to be made. Whether I decide to make a rule that says you cannot import them or the next Minister, it will not make any difference in this instance because they will not be available to be imported because they are not going to be manufactured. I take the view that we can still get to where we want to go but I have made a decision that we are going to go to that destination in a slightly different route to the one we had planned. I do not think we need to be passing legislation in Jersey when it is a reasonably good chance that the legislation will make very little difference. Legislation to ban the imported petrol vehicles in 2030, I think they are going to get to 2030 and find that the vehicles would not be available to buy new in any case. I am taking a punt but that is my view. I think we can avoid a lot of expensive legislation because it will happen in any case.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Yes, I am conscious of time in fact, Minister. Can I perhaps whittle through some questions relating to the impact of this panel's budget amendment to the Government Budget? You are aware that the States Assembly voted to approve Part 2 of the panel's budget 2026-2029 amendment in relation to your department funding. Are you able to update the panel about how the restoration of this funding has impacted various things but particularly in the first instance the Island's Asian hornet control programme?

The Minister for the Environment:

Okay. Let me start off by saying how grateful we all were for the intervention and the amendment because while 6-figure sums are not big in the big scheme of things of Government, we are spending £1 billion a year in the environment budget. It is a regulatory budget, it is a big number and we were very grateful for that addition. I will talk about Asian hornets and certainly I took on board the fact that despite the fact that we had the additional budget across the board, it was very much led - if I might use those words - by the Asian Hornet Group and people representing Asian hornets and the work that we needed to do. It verily came home to me that irrespective of anything else, this money, some of it must be used for Asian hornet work. I have had meetings with the officer specifically to

discuss that. I can say certainly in the first instance we have had the first meeting of the community side of Asian-hornet hunting. One of the initial decisions that has been taken straightaway is that we are going to increase significantly the amount of queen traps that we put out. The hope will be that we will trap more queens and less queens mean less nests and less nests mean less nests that have to be destroyed. But there is a lot of work to do and I thought the first thing to do was to increase the number of queen traps and we have done that, Willie. Moving on to the amendment generally and the very gratefully received amount of money, the disappointing thing is - and I am going to ask probably Willie to expand on this - that the savings that we had to make almost balanced out the additional money that you very kindly managed to put in our direction. But maybe, Willie, if you want to address some of those numbers.

Group Director, Natural Environment, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

Yes, if I can operationally say that we were extremely grateful; thank you for your amendment, which put us, as you say, Minister, on a net zero in respect of savings that we are anticipating making in 2026. But, sadly, our budget has been afflicted, as have many others or as everybody else's across Government by commitments to savings that were made in 2024 in respect of 2025 and 2026. That left us some £600,000 down at the beginning of this year and that means that we are still intent on making that £600,000 or trying to find how we can operate successfully with that level of savings down. We have obviously got the situation where we have got moratorium on recruitment which, ironically, helps us make some savings but obviously does not deliver on some of the key person-dependent posts that we require in order to ensure that we have got compliance with some of the issues that I informed the Scrutiny Panel of back end of last year and really why I am sure sat behind your rationale for attempting to modify that funding package. That we are operating on a monthly basis with our senior leadership team and our finance team. We are checking our prioritisation of spend is in the same way, as I know that every other department does too, to see how we can whittle down our spend, while also offering optimal service. We are committed to delivering the work streams that we have guaranteed to the Minister particularly but we are pressurised, I would suggest. Interestingly, and I know this is common with many other departments, we do not just have priority work streams that are linked to ministerial drivers. But of course we have work streams that are driven by the E.U. (European Union) U.K. reset requirements, wider multilateral obligations and existential pieces of European legislation.

[15:45]

We have many very competitive work streams, which it is very difficult to prioritise one against the other.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Thanks for that. Leading on from that, does that mean you have concerns about the level of the department's funding being cut next year? In fact before you answer that question, 10 or 12 years ago I chaired this panel when you, Minister, were Minister and I seem to recall you making the point that the Environment Department was a poor relation of all departments. Is that still the case? Do fellow Ministers recognise the importance of the environment, particularly in view of the extra responsibilities possibly given over the years?

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes. I do not think, Constable, that Members and fellow Ministers, it is not a case that they do not recognise the importance of the environment. Certainly, we know the public value the environment enormously. If you ever go out to consult them the environment is top of the list. The problem that I have and the problem that other Ministers for the Environment have is generally when it comes to the allocation of Government funding. It is very difficult to argue a case for protecting a plant species on the north coast when our Minister for Health and Social Services is asking for more money for some really difficult challenging decisions at the hospital or the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning looking for more teachers. Reality cuts in at some point and there is always a huge number of aspirations of wonderful work we could do for the environment. We all want to look after it better. But the monies available to do the work do not ever seem to increase dramatically. One thing we have been fortunate to have is the additional money in the rural support scheme and the marine support scheme and at least in the environmental sector. In the countryside the farmers are now paid increasingly large amounts of money but that is in response to they are coming up with public goods. They are helping with the biodiversity, they are helping to protect things, they are increasing habitats, they are farming and using less resource. In a roundabout way the additional money for farming and fishing is helping the environment. But more generally the Environment budget is never funded enough and it is always challenging. I very much hope and I wish success to the next Minister when they go to budget negotiations but I am under no illusions that budgetary pressures are not going to get any easier in Government next session.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

I will leave it there, Chair.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you, Minister. Just turning a little bit to the Rented Dwelling Licence Scheme, can you give an update on the progress made in relation to the implementation of the scheme?

The Minister for the Environment:

I can. I think the important number is that we are up 18,000 and something residential units on the Island. When we initiated the scheme we thought there might be about 15,000 but we have ended

up at 18,000. We have a number of applications every month, most of which are inspected. Kelly has got some numbers on the number of inspections of properties that have happened and the way we are moving forward. I know, for example, that the most frequent challenge we come up against is electrical and that is to do with electrical performance certificates and getting the electrician to check your property. We were not lenient to start off with but we were very understanding about the challenges we might have created when we started the scheme, that there might have been a huge rush for people to get their electrical certification up to speed and make sure it was right. But we have always said that provided you can show that your electrician is booked in to come and do the inspection, that we will be satisfied to take that forward. Kelly, tell us, what is the number? 18,759.

Group Director, Regulation, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

I would say 18,759 licences and we have undertaken 807 inspections. Noting that, we have had an additional 512 complaints logged on top of the 807. Of the 807 inspections, 174 inspections have resulted in actions being taken to meet minimum standards, so non-compliance. That would approximately account for 22 per cent of properties inspected and that would have a hazard that would need to be altered to meet the requirements of the law. No licences as yet have been refused but we have a number of matters that are currently under consideration in terms of potential enforcement action. I think that is, on the whole, quite a good representation of that. We have obviously published the one-year report but we will be publishing another annual report.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Yes. In that we have talked before about the scheme's code of practice and that there were several editions of them. So far with the latest amendments, do you have any more feedback from stakeholders? How do you receive that, engage with them on that? Is it feeling quite steady now, that the code of practice is where people feel ...

The Minister for the Environment:

Certainly from my perspective, Chair, I can report that I do not get a lot of feedback now. I do not know, Kelly may report differently. But certainly from my perspective I think things have settled down very well. People have taken, as we say, the code and the toolbox are our living documents. We will continue to amend them as required. We are still working with the Landlords' Association.

Group Director, Regulation, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

We work very closely with the J.L.A. (Jersey Landlords' Association).

The Minister for the Environment:

Kelly, I do not know how much more, are we still receiving input? I presume we have some input.

Group Director, Regulation, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

We do work very closely with the J.L.A. on a number of matters. The code of practice was changed back in April 2025 but we have not had any specific feedback to make further changes that will cause us to make improvements since then. But we do accept feedback, generally speaking, and if there was any changes then we would act on that.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I suppose this will be soon where it will be the ...

Group Director, Regulation, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

The renewals.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

The renewal, yes, Minister.

Group Director, Regulation, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

Yes. The renewals would be from 1st May ...

The Minister for the Environment:

Are you giving the bad news or am I?

Group Director, Regulation, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

It is your Scrutiny hearing, Minister.

The Minister for the Environment:

Maybe I should, seeing as I am the politician. We certainly had hoped, Chair, that by now we would have a ... it had always been our intention to have a portal, so that people who came to renew this year could have a very simple and straightforward means of doing that. Unfortunately, our own rented dwelling portal has fallen under a wider Government banner of a general portal system; I do not know the technical details. But that general portal system has been delayed and is not going to be ready in time for us to piggyback on to it for the rented dwellings. However, we have been working hard on this. We will have a form available, which we will email to everybody. If there is no detailed changes, they just let us know and it will go through; if there are changes they will need to contact us. I apologise for that but we are working really hard to try to make this renewal this year as simple and straightforward as it possibly can be. Kelly, you will have some more details but I am the one to blame.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Can I just quickly ask because we have probably cast our minds back to 2024 when this was all happening and there was a hope that time we would have had a portal. I think I.T. (information technology) realities meant we did not. But I presume work was done to on-board a portal back then, perhaps on to one of the existing systems that was within the Regulation Department's toolkit. Has any work been done to I.T. that is now going to have to be scrapped by way of changing plans, I guess, is my question?

The Minister for the Environment:

I think before Kelly answers I might just say I think there was the possibility of a number of different individual portals being developed in different parts of Government. I think a decision was taken - my brain is starting to go - at some point, no, we will do this all in one place so that we do not duplicate costs and everything else. I suspect that is where we may have fallen foul of the system or so to speak.

Group Director, Regulation, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

It is the intention of Digital Services in the Government to provide a one single-customer portal for all citizens. I think that has been worked on but it is incredibly complex. Because of the focus on cybersecurity priorities have had to shift but I know it is still in train. We would hope to join on a number of our licensing renewals on to that customer portal. Yes, we thought that when we looked at the read of project where there was a few sums could have a single regulation portal but, again, that did not make sense to start to develop a portal separately to the main Government single-citizen portal. We will join the single-citizen portal when that comes live but that is ...

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

It went live on Friday; it went live on Friday.

Group Director, Regulation, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

Did it? Did it?

The Minister for the Environment:

There will be some comms going out to all the ...

Group Director, Regulation, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

In a phase, in the next phase I am sure we will be able to join on that, if not ready for May.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Okay, thank you.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

The main point though is that 1st May there will not be a portal, so it will have to be a form that will be sent out and I assume you will give then a little bit more time for people to fill it out.

The Minister for the Environment:

I was just about to say we are very close to contacting everybody, explaining what is happening and making it as simple and easy as we possibly can, especially if you have not changed any details.

Group Director, Regulation, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

Yes, it would not be a form to fill out, we are hoping to have a pre-completed form of the current details from the system in which you would only just certify that that is still correct.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Okay, thank you.

Group Director, Regulation, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

But we will have communications in the next 2 weeks or so.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Minister, of course we have had a recent case involving the death of a work permit holder in farm worker accommodation and it was highlighted that the smoke detector was found not to be operational, which is considered of course to be the minimum standard for landlords to ensure the alarm system is operational. What impact has this case had on your priorities for inspection of rented dwellings, especially accommodation provided by employers to employees and particularly farm worker accommodation?

The Minister for the Environment:

Thank you for that, Chair. I think the first thing I want to say is to accept my sympathy. But I think I want to wait for the written report from the inquest. I know I have received some verbal comments; I have read what has been in the press and what have you. But there will be a written report which will come to me and at that point I think we will look at it. But certainly I am aware that there will be some recommendations in that report from the inquest and I think at that point the Government will have to look at that and see where we are. I am aware that the Farmers' Union will be involved and others will be contacted directly as well for their response. We will see what it says but it may well be that the Directorate may want to take a slightly different view. We usually work at the moment following complaints or follow intelligence. We may make a decision to be a bit more proactive rather than reactive but we will see. I do not know if you want to comment any more on that, Kelly.

Group Director, Regulation, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

I think it is difficult to comment until the Coroner's final report has been released.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

That will be very useful to have a response as soon as there is a written report and then an official response of how changes will, potentially, be done in this area or enhancements. But, Minister, for the benefit of the public, could you explain the process by which a work permit holder staying in accommodation provided by their employer can raise concerns about the standard of inferior accommodation? I know we have talked a lot about more general rented dwellings but it is just if there is a specific process or do they go through the same process that other tenants do?

The Minister for the Environment:

I will ask Kelly if she wants to ...

Group Director, Regulation, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

Any tenant can contact the Regulation Directorate on any of the licences and has contact information on the back. Anyone who is a tenant can ask for a copy of that licence from their landlord for the accommodation. If they do not have a copy of their licence, then they can contact us direct. Details are on gov.je or environmentalhealth@gov.je or regulationinquiries@gov.je and we will be able to provide that advice. As we had discussed, we have had over 500 contacts or complaints in the past year, so there are quite a number of people who would be able to get in contact with us.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

This would include farm worker accommodation, any kind of accommodation it would be the same.

Group Director, Regulation, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

Any accommodation at all, any rental accommodation and they will be able to help.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

There is the number in the information provided to the work permit holders, so they know exactly ...

Group Director, Regulation, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

A condition of all rent dwelling licences is the licence should be provided to the tenants and on that is the contact information. It is a legal requirement for landlords to provide this information to their tenants. If tenants do not have a copy of the licence for the contact, they can obtain details from gov.je and contact us and we will have discussions about that with them.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you. Minister just looking at the time, we had another section on enforcement but I think we probably could either send that to you or know that we can pass it on to the next Minister.

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, the next Minister would rather take that one.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

But really because this is our last quarterly hearing, knowing that we have a specific P.F.A.S hearing but that will obviously focus very specifically on P.F.A.S. but this is our general last final quarterly hearing with you. Looking back at your specific term of office this time, what has been the most challenging area for you?

The Minister for the Environment:

I do not know, I have not thought about that. There were 2 things I wanted to talk about, the first one is the community involvement which I received from the work at the Howard Davis Farm, which is not challenging in the slightest. It amazes me how many members of the public want to come out and help us with environmental projects, so I am extremely grateful to them.

[16:00]

But the one thing that has been a challenge and it was the challenge I was given when the Chief Minister asked me to do this job, which is the planning reform challenge. I am surrounded by officers and all the way through the department who have responded fantastically well to those challenges. It was a challenge to pick up the planning reform programme. Our performance in the department was not where we wanted it to be for any number of different reasons. But the staff have been absolutely fantastic, they have rallied to the call. We are now distributing and putting out results above our targeted aspirations. We have still got a large number of applications coming into the department. But the pre-app advice that we now give means something; people are appreciating that. The advice is top quality, that has been borne out now in the number of applications which get approved and approved quickly. It has been borne out by the number of appeals, the reduced number of appeals that we are seeing and those appeals resulting in far less turnovers of department decisions. I would like to just take the opportunity to thank every member of the team in the Directorate, particularly in planning who have done a fantastic job in coming up with now what is a highly regarded planning system and a system appreciated by Islanders. I know the industry because I get the feedback from some of our strongest critics quietly in the corner say to me: "It is really good; the department is doing good stuff." That was the big challenge and I cannot believe that we have done it in some cases. But it is thanks to Kelly and everybody from Kelly downwards and I mean absolutely everybody because it starts with the first contact that comes in the door; the

people that validate the applications and the advice that is given before those applications come in, everybody through the entire team. I am grateful for the opportunity to thank them on my behalf for doing my job for me.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you, Minister. I suppose the one last question and I know we have touched on a lot of areas but obviously will be ongoing into the next political term but could you give maybe one advice that you would give to the incoming Minister for the Environment on maybe some of those areas or ...

The Minister for the Environment:

I do not know. But one of the things I have learnt over the years is always make sure you hear both sides of any argument before you decide which way you are jumping. If you want to be the Minister for the Environment do not expect to please anybody any other time because it is a job which you have to have very thick skin for but it is a hugely fulfilling job. But very often you have to take decisions which people do not particularly agree with and I will put it that way.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you very much, Minister. Officers, thank you very much for your time today and also all the other times that we have had our quarterly hearings.

The Minister for the Environment:

It has been a great pleasure, Chair. I think we have worked together well. I think Scrutiny is to be a critical friend and there to help the Minister come to better decisions. I look at the panel and think how I am sure we have come up to better decisions through your input, so I am grateful.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you, Minister. We know that we have got a few more decisions to make before the end of the term. Thank you.

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes.

[16:03]