



Common Strategic Policy Review Panel

Common Strategic Policy

Witness: The Minister for the Environment

Monday, 27th October 2025

Panel:

Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North (Chair)

Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade (Vice-Chair)

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour

Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier Central

Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade

Witnesses:

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

Mr. A. Marx, Head of Development and Land Regulation

Mr. A. Scate, Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment Department

[13:00]

Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North (Chair):

Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the public hearing of the Common Strategic Policy Review Panel. We have with us today Deputy Steve Luce, Minister for the Environment. Our public hearing will concentrate questions around Common Strategic Policy delivery and how it works through the cross-departmental areas. We will question how the Minister balances short-term pressures with ongoing planning, how the decisions align with the Common Strategic Policy and what the risks and the outcomes and measures are. But before we will go into the questions, let us do introductions. Deputy Inna Gardiner, I am President of the Scrutiny Liaison Committee and Chair of the Common Strategic Review Policy Panel.

Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade (Vice-Chair):

Deputy Helen Miles, Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny Liaison Committee and Chair of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour:

Deputy Louise Doublet. I am Chair of the Health and Social Security Scrutiny Panel.

Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier Central:

I am Deputy Catherine Curtis. I am Chair of Children, Education and Home Affairs.

Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

Deputy Alex Curtis, member of the Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Panel.

The Minister for the Environment:

Deputy Steve Luce. I am Minister for ...

Deputy I. Gardiner:

The Deputy.

The Minister for the Environment:

Sorry, apologies, Monty.

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

Deputy Montfort Tadier. I am Chair of the Economic and International Affairs Scrutiny Panel.
Thanks for allowing me join online today.

The Minister for the Environment:

Deputy Steve Luce, Minister for the Environment. To my right is ...

Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

Andy Scate, Chief Officer for Infrastructure and Environment.

Head of Development and Land Regulation:

Andrew Marx, Head of Development and Land.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Thank you. I will start general C.S.P. (Common Strategic Policy) delivery and general questions. In what ways does your departmental budget contribute directly to the delivery of the 13 Common Strategic Policy priorities?

The Minister for the Environment:

I think the budget was not particularly affected by the C.S.P. I am just looking for my notes specifically on the budget. Andy, you might be able to help there, but my recollection is business as usual with policy. We obviously did a lot of work on affordable housing. We have put money into rented dwelling licences but we did not have a specific fund for either of those. When it came to energy strategy, yes, we had some money from the C.E.F. (Climate Emergency Fund) for wind, but the energy strategy - which is going to follow - will be in-house and business as usual. I do not envisage at this point in time asking for additional money. In any case, if I was to ask for additional money it would probably be to try to fund some additional staff. Certainly, as you will well know, we are on a recruitment freeze; no consultants and all that side of things. In alongside an additional funding request would have to come a specific application for additional consultants and that is not impossible, but difficult to know. I do not know if you have got any more comments on budget but it did not really affect us too much.

Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

No, I would agree. I think some of the C.S.P. priorities we are doing within existing resources, certainly the work we do on affordable housing, especially in the rented sector, and certainly it gets covered within our regulation directorate budgets. Planning reform similar, within regulation. They are 2 examples of where our existing funds have I guess stretched across those areas.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

But from my understanding when the Common Strategic Policy was agreed, your department said: "Whatever we agreed in the Common Strategic Policy, you need to find the funds within your budget", how you deliver the Common Strategic Policy priorities.

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes. I have to say, Chair, that thinking back to the agreement on the C.S.P. priorities, I took a very naive view that the work I particularly wanted to do did not necessarily need to be a C.S.P. priority because it was work I would do in-house as part of business as usual. Later in the day it transpired that the C.S.P. priorities were the absolute priorities and that compromised me a little because I felt I had not made enough of a strong case for many of the things I wanted to do. It just had not felt necessary to put on the list. Fortunately we had the C.S.P. 13, you will remember, which was added to the list and I am really grateful it was now, because without that, some of our energy, work might not get quite the emphasis it does. But at the time we felt we could cope with it in-house; funds are

very tight. But of course since the C.S.P. priorities have been agreed, we have had, as I said, the recruitment freeze, we have had the stop on consultants. That alone gave us a few little headaches inside the department because we had some big pieces of work we were undertaking where we had to let our consultants go and take that work up in-house with officers who had been doing other work. I am thinking - although there were other cases - specifically about wind. For example, we had 2 or 3 consultants working on that. That work came back into the department and we had to carry on using existing staff.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Thank you, Minister, it is helpful. When I am looking through the C.S.P. priorities, one of them: "Reform the planning service to get Jersey building", it is within one to 12. Have you received extra funding? Because it is not business as usual, it is something that was committed as one of the priorities. We know that other priorities received extra funding on top of their business as usual.

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes. I am sure Andrew will talk to this in a minute, but reforming the planning service was a change in emphasis inside the department. We did not engage any new people to do that. I do not know, how did we transform it? We just said: "Right, we are going to all knuckle down, we are going to work really hard, try to clear the backlog. We are going to improve our service by offering a proper pre-application advice service. The staff are going to work really hard to clear the number of applications in-house. We are going to all talk to each other and see if we cannot get some consistency and coherency going." It was hard and the staff worked really hard for 12 months.

Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

Yes, it did not necessarily follow that if you were a C.S.P. priority you would get more funds. We had to look at our existing resources and was that a reprioritisation or a priority for us to deliver the C.S.P. In short, no, we did not get additional funds for planning reform, but that was a case of reprioritising our efforts within the department to focus on that.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Thank you. You mentioned that obviously a freeze on consultants and that your department specifically needs specific expertise to deliver some of the big pieces of work and it has put some delivery at risk or delayed. Can you tell us the main financial workforce or capacity risks for C.S.P. delivery in your area and how you mitigate it and it is connected to C.S.P. and the current budget that was presented? What other, apart from ...

The Minister for the Environment:

I think the one specific subject that I would cite myself, which was potentially my personal number one priority when I came into this 2-year session was to get a water strategy written. We have had a member of staff, an important member of staff, who has been ill for quite a while. But nevertheless, the resources required within the policy team to undertake the additional work on gas - because we lost our consultants and a huge amount of additional work on wind because we lost our consultants - meant that I was faced with some difficult decisions. Eventually I had to come to the point where I said: "Right, I will not move ahead with water strategy from the States perspective, Government perspective. Jersey Water are doing a 5-year strategy, we will have a good look at that when it comes out." As I said, my number one priority when I came into office is I wanted a comprehensive water strategy for the Island by the time we head to the election. I have had to put that on hold. That work will get picked up in the future. But I guess that is probably for myself one of the main implications, one of the main things that came out of the consultancy freeze.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Any other areas that you declared when you stood as the Minister that you needed to reprioritise?

The Minister for the Environment:

In some cases it was not necessarily a reprioritisation of the work, it was for me to agree that the output would be delayed. I think for wind, for example, I had hoped initially to go to the Assembly much sooner. I think there has been a number of pieces of work which we have had to push back in order for the existing staff to have time to cope with all the additional work they had to take on because of the consultancy freeze. We have also had a few posts which during the 2 years were still vacant, but I think certainly in policy, the team is just about up to speed. I think another part - certainly in planning - we have got a few gaps but we have filled some senior roles. One of the reasons we have been able to improve the output of the department is we managed to get some proper help for Andrew here. In particular, we have taken on a manager for compliance and we have also taken on a manager for planning specifically. Andrew was doing his job and those 2 other jobs for the first 12 months of being with us.

Head of Development and Land Regulation:

Almost 24.

The Minister for the Environment:

He is a little bit more relaxed than he was.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Okay. Yes, I will hand to Deputy Doublet.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I would like to ask, as a result of all of these changes that you have had to make, going back to the Carbon Neutral Roadmap, has that resulted in any change to the ambition to deliver net zero emissions by 2050?

The Minister for the Environment:

No. I think I can confidently say that there has not been any change because of the consultancy freeze. Officers in that specific area have maintained their level of work. We have got a number of initiatives that we still want to put on the table. We are having discussions with Jersey Electricity about the price of electricity moving forward and how we could work with them and the industry to deliver many of our aspirations. But as regards carbon neutral, I think my team - as I am thinking and working my way through them - were there at the start and they are still there now. I think we are pretty much delivering on the aspirations, as we said we would. We are hoping to get really stuck in properly to an energy strategy in the very near future, certainly by the beginning of next year. We have had a slight change of dates, but of course we have next year in order to deliver that by the end of the year and I am confident we can do that.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I had some questions about your ability to influence funding allocations and what challenges you have had with the C.S.P. priorities, but I think you have articulated them very well. With the benefit of hindsight, do you think that narrowing the focus to the 13 priorities has worked?

The Minister for the Environment:

Possibly, and I guess the smaller the number you would have the more emphasis you would have to give to that smaller number and maybe there is more chance that you would get them all done. I think from my own perspective, as I said, I think I was a little bit naive at the time and maybe needed a greater understanding of what the C.S.P. priorities meant, as opposed to general priorities within the department or general priorities that a particular Minister came into office wanting to focus on. For example, as I just said, my personal number one priority was a water strategy. I did not even think to put it on the list because I just presumed I would be carrying on with it as business as usual anyway.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

It is interesting because I know we talked in the States before as well before about the consultancy freeze and the recruitment - the consultancy ban, if you like - and the recruitment freeze. Between now and next election, how are you going to un-bung these areas? Because you have clearly got the funding to do some of this work. What is it that is preventing you from breaking through that consultancy ban and the recruitment freeze?

The Minister for the Environment:

That would be a question for I suppose a wider Council of Ministers, Chief Minister, Minister for Treasury and Resources and the leadership team within the civil service.

Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

Yes. I think we do not ban all consultancy work, so there are still some consultancy works that are agreed. Sometimes if that is technical work where we do not have capacity in-house, there is a number of examples of that where it is tied to our risk profile. If it is a tier 1 risk for Government and we have to get work done, then that is a conversation we can have. We can also have a conversation around how long that consultancy is around for: it is not an ongoing over many years type consultancy, it may well be a few months and with the furlough period, effectively in there as well. There are ways through the system but I think the blanket: "We will just get a consultant in to answer the question" has gone. We have got, I think, greater tests now: does this deliver against Government risk; is it time-limited; do we not have any of this technical expertise in-house? Those sort of questions can get applied.

[13:15]

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Because I know you talk about technical expertise in-house; that is very much about capability. You may well have the capability in-house but if you have not got the capacity you could be waiting years for these things.

The Minister for the Environment:

I can give you one specific example, which will be close to your own heart, which will be the West of Island Planning Framework. I do not think it was ever the department's intention to do that piece of work ourselves. I know you need a special level of understanding to do that type of policy work; we would commission that in. The consultants would come in, they would do all the interviews and a lot of the early work and then hand it back to the department for delivery and what have you. There is an example there. But I am thinking to some others which are much bigger than a West of Island Planning Framework, where we will definitely needs lots of help, which is the effects of Brexit. We know that as the U.K. (United Kingdom) and the E.U. (European Union) move into this reset where we need to open our borders and hopefully trade becomes a lot easier, in order to do that we have to make sure that the Island is set up with all our laws in place, which make us equivocal to both the E.U. and the U.K. In the past we have not done that. We have certainly applied them but we have not had the law set in stone. I know in the Environment Department, for example, we have got a

massive amount of work that is going to include a huge amount of time for Law Officers, law drafters. I think we will probably need some very specific help for that, which is going to be expensive.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Will that elevate itself on to the risk register, which will attract the ability for you to be able to recruit consultants for that?

Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

Yes. I think the quick answer is, yes, it definitely has ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

What I am hearing is that is the only mechanism you seem to have. Is it something as sufficient a priority in your department you have to get it on to the risk register?

Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

Yes, risk register: it may not be so relevant to the Environment portfolio, but if we have got a structural assessment to make if it is a building or things like that, some of that resource we do have in-house and some we do not. I guess it is a question of: "Do we have any ability to say no to this work?" If the answer to that is: "No, it is an emergency, we have to do it" that gets it up on to the risk register. If it is about a technical assessment, do you have the funds to do it as well? I guess it is multi-part equation.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Thank you. If you are only speaking about the risk register, Deputy Tadier, would you like to ask a question?

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes, thank you, Chair. This is a slightly niche question I suppose, Minister. It is about the Community Risk Register, so in case of any big events or pandemics that affects the wider community. Are there allocations to your department that have been informed by the Community Risk Register and can you tell us what the key risks that would be relevant to your area?

The Minister for the Environment:

I have to say I am not aware of any funds that have been put specifically into my department for risk register work, if you want to put it like that. We are a department which raises quite a bit of money through fees and licences and stuff like that. We do not get a very large cheque from the Treasurer, for want of a better phrase, at the beginning of the year. I think it is only £7 million, £8 million, something like that. I do not think it is very great. We do rely very heavily on income from fees and

licences. In many cases we would like to look at the possibility of creating some new fees in certain areas where we know we are providing services just about everywhere else would charge. In some cases we would like to look at increasing the level of fees. But again, that has been a priority for this Council of Ministers to not to put up anything over 2.5 per cent, knowing that even 2.5 per cent does not quite get to R.P.I. (Retail Price Index) or cost of living. We have been very tight and hard on not only our expenditure but also about the amount of money that we want to take from the population. The result of that is we are tight on budget and we do what we can, but it becomes increasingly difficult to do everything.

Deputy M. Tadier:

If I can follow up then, I suppose the question to ask is if there were a disaster of some kind, so if there were another pandemic next week or if there was a big flood or there was some other unforeseen event that fell to your department to do something about, how well resourced would you be and what would your plan of action be?

The Minister for the Environment:

I think it would be clear. My plan of action would be to walk up the corridor and speak to either the Chief Minister or the Minister for Treasury and Resources, because I am conscious I do not have a spare penny in my department. There is things I would like to be doing, people I would like to employ, a lot of work I would like to get done. I think everybody is the same, we all would like to do more than we can. But certainly when it comes to funds for emergency work, we have no contingency in the department and I think we would be going to the Treasurer.

Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

Yes. I think, if it helps, to maybe outline some of the risks, the wider community risks the department faces. Clearly there are I guess instant response risks that are around regulatory building safety, those sort of things, pollution risks, where if something happens, the team has to mobilise. I guess we are the frontline responder for pest and animal disease outbreaks and also within our environment public health function, community health outbreaks. They are the sort of risks that we mainly carry within the department. The first job generally will be reprioritising staff because if it is an emergency some of your B.A.U. (business as usual) work just has to be paused and you can redeploy people into that. However, that will only go so far if obviously we are incurring longer-term costs because of an outbreak response, if I can use that, depending on whether it be animals or pests or whatever that may be. That might then need further resources and that is a conversation we would have with Treasury.

The Minister for the Environment:

If you think back to the start of the last pandemic, I think over half the staff in planning went over to work on the pandemic.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Yes, I remember this.

The Minister for the Environment:

Because the Government felt that everybody would stop building and what happened was they all sat at home and put in planning applications. When we came out of the pandemic, the department was faced with hundreds and hundreds of applications in-house which, to be fair, we struggled to get on top of for quite a while. There was a lot of work to do after it.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Yes, I remember there was lots of environmental nuisances and other things came to the department. It was increased, yes.

The Minister for the Environment:

Andy mentioned we are the most southerly outpost of the British Isles. We monitor health and disease on animals very closely. We see bluetongue: recently we had a bluetongue vaccination programme on the Island; we have not said a lot about it. We managed to fund that in-house, just about. The dairy farmers are very pleased about that. But other diseases like - I am trying to think - lumpy skin disease, which is exactly what it says on the tin, last week they got 3 outbreaks in Brittany, so things like that we have got to monitor really closely. Let us hope we do not, but if we ever had foot and mouth disease in Jersey I think we would immediately be going down the corridor and saying: "We need more help. We are going to need more veterinary help. We will need some infrastructure help." Yes.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Is this just diseases that occur in animals?

The Minister for the Environment:

Sorry?

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Is this just diseases that occur in animals or are you talking about population ...

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes. We monitor all animals, obviously. Avian flu is one that we monitor, but diseases of cattle are particularly important to the Island because our Island herd is so important to us. We monitor very closely foot and mouth disease, we monitor bluetongue, lumpy skin disease and there is probably 2 or 3 others, but our vets on a weekly basis are making sure. Some of these are spread by mosquitos and insects, and as the temperatures are slowly increasing these diseases are moving up from the Mediterranean and up to Europe and eventually they will come us, because it is particularly important to the U.K. because they will enter the U.K. very quickly.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Thank you. But you mentioned community health outbreaks. That is related to ...

Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

Yes. Clearly animal health sits with us, generally diseases affecting all animals, as well as plants and pests. We keep an eye on outbreaks, we do not want certain pests in the Island either, many insects and things like that. That is a potential risk. There is certainly a crossover into human health related to insects and whatever they may be and what they can do to you. Our public health function, our environmental health officers, I would describe them as they are the foot soldiers for public health as well. If you have say a salmonella outbreak or those sort of things ... certainly in COVID, that is where we firstly centred our contact tracing function. Yes, we do cross into some of those public health functions and liaise with our public health colleagues who are in Health.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

With your tight budget, has that had an impact on this area of community health outbreaks?

The Minister for the Environment:

I have to say a lot of this stuff is dealt with in-house and my management team, my chief officers and my senior officers will reprioritise at the start of the week if there is something specific that needs to be done. The low-level stuff in general planning is business as usual really.

Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

If you get a big community outbreak I think we would struggle if it goes beyond a certain number of cases and if you have to contact trace a lot of people and so on and so forth. But we do have an in-house resource with our environmental health or we call it environmental consumer protection. But yes, if it goes beyond a small scale B.A.U. bit of business, then we would need help.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Okay, let us ...

The Minister for the Environment:

We recently said, for example, in rented dwellings there was a number of things - not actually to do with permits and licences - where we said there was a question to one of the officers about the amounts of resource and time they had to check on the way people had been treated in work. He was quite clear. He said: "At the moment my small team concentrates on making sure that the qualifications and the paperwork certificates which are produced with a permit application, they are not frauds." Because he said: "At the moment there seems to be a huge amount of fraudulent paperwork going on." He said: "My team at the moment are not on the coalface and getting out and checking because they are spending a lot of time looking at other aspects." As much as we would like to, I think in all those sorts of departments staff have to be where the priority is.

Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

I guess it ...

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Just a minute, yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Just to finish off this area of questioning, can I just ask: I have been concerned from the opening, Minister, that you have basically said that you are already on a tight budget and that it seems to me that there are 2 types of budget in front of us. For some departments we have got growth budgets, if we look at Health and Education and many departments. Is it fair to say that your allocation is effectively an austerity budget and that you would like to have had more money for staffing, if possible, so that we can try and understand what areas and types of potential work are at risk of not being done in the next term of office? I think that is an area of interest really.

The Minister for the Environment:

I think that would probably be a fair observation. We are not a department which has benefited from growth money. As I said, we have made a few applications to try to increase the amount of money we have in the department to use and spend, but money is very tight. The priority has been given to Health and to Education and to certain parts of Home Affairs where we have got some firefighting with the things that we have done. Despite my best intentions - and I try as hard as I can - I accept that Environment does not always sit very close to the top of the list. We all try our best but we have to accept that Health is really important and maybe that is where it should go. But I am not sure I would use the word "austerity" but it has been made very clear we are not to do certain things and that means our budget is quite fixed and challenging.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Thank you. Minister, as you know, we are looking forward to, on the Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel, having a budget hearing with you, I think next week. We do want to talk more about your role as almost the environmental lead within the Council of Ministers when it comes to the Common Strategic Policy and we will keep our questioning to the C.S.P. The panel will obviously have its questions for you next week. I was interested to hear your comments about priority 13 in particular, which is about the climate emergency and the Carbon Neutral Roadmap. It would be good to understand what the impact of having the climate emergency and the Carbon Neutral Roadmap as a common strategic priority has been during 2025. Apart from the energy strategy, which I would like to touch on later, what has the tangible impact of having it as a C.S.P. in the last year been?

The Minister for the Environment:

I am not sure that I would say that there has been a tangible difference, but what it has allowed us to do obviously is to point to the C.S.P. list and say: "Look, energy is a priority. It is one that we need to get on with and it is one we cannot ignore" because if you are going to go down the road and say the only thing is the C.S.P. and other stuff falls away, it is on the list and it is there and it needs to be taken notice of. We have prioritised our work very much this last 12 months on wind. I know wind is only a very small part of the energy sector but we decided we wanted to do the wind work before we got on to starting in earnest the energy strategy.

[13:30]

Obviously we are continuing to do good work. We are trying to reduce carbon. We have had a successful scheme for replacing petrol and diesel vehicles with electric. We continue to fund the home heating changes to try to get away from carbon boilers. We are also continuing to subsidise the installation of chargers in homes for charging vehicles. We hope to do more. We have got a lot of work going on in that sector, as you would expect, as a priority. There is work on gas; there is work on all sorts of things. Andy is talking about leases for the fuel farm. I think there is a general agreement of course we will need a fuel farm for the next couple of decades at least, in one way, shape, or form. But certainly the inclusion of energy on the C.S.P. list, which is your specific group, it has allowed us to continue to work at the same pace as we would like to without ... I think is probably the best way to put it, but it has not resulted any additional money. Fortunately for us, we have the Climate Emergency Fund, which has been very useful in this regard because that fund is funding much of this work. We have made an application to increase the charges for vehicle emissions coming into the Island, which has been accepted in the budget, and we will talk about that. We had some other ideas about trying to go even further. I am trying to think what they were off the top of my head on vehicles. Yes, fuel duty. We had proposed maybe some further increases, but those did not go through. We just had to stick with the 9 pence and that will be ...

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

This is where my question was going partly, because one of the challenges you have is the balance between fighting for the representation of priority 13 and your environmental hat, and the priorities about keeping fees and charges low. To what extent have you been able to leverage the agreement by the Assembly addressing the climate emergency in the Carbon Neutral Roadmap, which requires funding, and which you have a fund for and need money put into the fund? I am trying to get into the success and was having it here any help, because you clearly were not able to get across aspirations on fuel duty, for example.

The Minister for the Environment:

It is difficult. We have £23 million in the fund, and that sounds like a lot, but it is not going to scratch the surface of trying to do a proper job of getting towards zero, but that is for the future. The financial strategy that we will need to fund carbon is still to be done, and that is a piece of work we have not got round to yet, but we will need to do that soon. As I said, I have managed to get some increases in V.E.D. (Vehicle Emissions Duty). I would have liked more on fuel duty. That was not accepted. We had a chat around Council of Ministers about that. We have maintained the 9 pence. It is impossible to say if energy had not been number 13 on the C.S.P. list whether the 9 pence would have been maintained. It may be that somebody came ... I cannot say. But you would find it difficult to make a case to say that specifically on those areas, fuel duty and vehicle emissions, that the addition of energy as number 13 made a great deal of difference.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Okay. Moving to some of the wider ones, and I know other panel members will touch on, but ones outside of where we might go, for example, reducing red tape in business and affordable homes. To what extent have you, around the Council of Ministers table, been advocating for environmental considerations within the C.S.P. areas? Because again, like keeping fees low or reducing barriers to business, there is an inherent tension. To what extent have you contributed a voice around the Council of Ministers table in essence as a representative of the environment and environmental sustainability?

The Minister for the Environment:

It would be fair to say - and minutes may well reflect this - that in environmental matters, quite often recently I have not necessarily been a lone voice, but certainly a voice in leading the minority inasmuch as in some areas we are, and I sort of alluded to this 10, 15 minutes ago. Sometimes people have to make a choice between funding and the environment or health or education and stuff like that. It is tough trying to push the environmental agenda. I do not know that there is very much more I can say other than that. In some cases I will be putting forward an environmental case and

people will say: "Yes, we agree with you, and that is right and you should be doing it." But there is always a "but" at the end of the sentence. You know it is coming and it is: "But I think in this instance we need to think about our determination not to increase the cost of living, or our determination to not increase the amount of money the States are spending, or reduce expenditure here." Life in politics is always a balance, is it not, a balance of policies and environmental policies? It has been difficult to promote them successfully because there are so many other challenges. It is tough out there. We do not have enough money to do what we want and we have to make priorities.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Do you think environment is becoming the poor relation in the way that infrastructure was the poor relation, and when times got tight, the money always came away from the Infrastructure budget because it is not short term, it is medium or long term?

The Minister for the Environment:

I do not know that Infrastructure ... they probably still feel they are still the poor relation because they ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

It is likely they have been the poor relation, which is what has got us to this position, whereby now you need that investment.

The Minister for the Environment:

There are a number of places you could look for this, but there is no question in my mind that if you look more globally and you see the effects that President Trump has had on wind energy, for example, or drilling for oil and stuff like that, there has definitely been a step back in recent months around the globe away from environmental initiatives to try to help our carbon emissions and address climate change. That has been very unfortunate because that just has a ripple effect which goes on and on and on. We have seen that with car production, take-up of electric vehicles and all sorts of things like that. It does make promoting the environmental case more challenging. We have always seen this with ... and I use the example of organic vegetables, because in my previous life I was a grower, and we always knew when times are good, people would pay more for organic vegetables because it is a healthier option. But we equally knew when times were going bad or tough, the first thing that would suffer would be organic vegetables, people would revert to a cheaper option, which was conventional production. I think it is a little bit like that with environment at the moment, whereby there are other priorities making it difficult.

Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

I think the fact ... going back to the previous question about having a C.S.P. does mean that it is still on the agenda: environmental behaviour, environmental knowledge and education, climate reduction, carbon reduction, all of those things. If it was not in the C.S.P. we would run the risk of it being deprioritised and defunded, so the fact is we have been able to keep it alive and there is still a debate to be had. I guess there is the big debate. It is not growing, but it is at least still there within Government thinking. Some of the environmental work we do is effectively embedded in other things: planning guidance, planning decisions, building bylaws, those sort of things inherently have environmental parts to them. Location of development, parking standards, all of those things are part of the environmental debate. So we keep it alive in that sense in terms of day-to-day decisions, but in terms of any decision ...

The Minister for the Environment:

I mentioned the £23 million, and it will not go very far. But the way we maintain that money at the moment is fuel duty, V.E.D. The statistics on the amount of liquid fuel that is sold in Jersey has been slowly falling year on year for a number of years now. That will continue. We will get to a point - hopefully not too distant future - where we will transition away from petrol and diesel vehicles to electric. That in itself, there will not be V.E.D. coming in on those to the department because the vehicles will not be imported to have the V.E.D. on, so we do need to address the way that we are going to fund the Climate Emergency Fund. That is going to be hopefully a discussion we can have soon with Treasury around the replacement for fuel duty, because the hope is that there will not be a lot of fuel being sold to have a duty on. At that point, we will need a replacement policy.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

We are going to move on to an area you touched on, which is energy strategy. It felt like the fact that priority 13 was included almost provides an anchor for the fact that the energy strategy can have a focus and can be a meaningful piece of work to be delivered. So in that sense, could you perhaps expand on - since the approval of P.11 - how that energy strategy is now playing a part of your work stream in 2025 and where it will go as it kind of ties in, as you said to ...

The Minister for the Environment:

The best thing to say is that obviously P.11 came along after we had set out our stall. We have only had 2 years to do our work, and that was going to be challenging enough, and then P.11 arrived and we agreed, yes, we would do it. I think we always knew it would be something which would come, mainly next year. It needs to be delivered by the end of next year. I have already outlined the workload on officers; it meant that we could not do everything at once. It would have been nice to have started sooner. We will shortly be concluding the work on wind, which will allow some officers in the department to move immediately over to energy strategy. The conclusion of wind will obviously inform the strategy, whether we are looking at oil, liquids, gas, sustainable energy, all

those sorts of things, but it is a vital piece of work, but I think the challenges within the department the last 12 months have meant that we have not really got stuck into it yet, but our intention is to start. It will be for the next Government to agree it, but it is certainly going to be for us to start it.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

To what extent, given the short time, will other C.S.P. priorities be able to play into the energy strategy, whether it be providing more affordable homes or meeting lower energy costs? Again, just to tie this to the C.S.P., is the whole Government view of where it is directing able to feed into this strategy to ensure it is not siloed and that it delivers not just for priority 13, but for the wider Government agenda? Is that part of the scope to look at energy affordability, to look at other parts, or even reforming the planning service around where energy provision is? Is this something that can be sufficiently holistic around the wider agenda?

The Minister for the Environment:

Andrew might want to talk briefly to the review of building standards, which we are undertaking at the moment, and that will make our houses even more energy efficient and more insulated. But my own view would be that what we are doing currently within the planning and building world is not necessarily going to make too much of a difference because our standards are already good. They will get a little bit better, but it is not the new homes that are burning the energy, it is the historic stock of housing which needs to be addressed. There is another Island Plan coming down the line in a couple of years. That will be an important document to address that. To get back to the V.E.D. and the carbon emissions, we know the area of the Island where we emit the most carbon is in transport, so that is where we are going to have to continue to put a lot of work. Do you want to talk very briefly about energy and efficiency?

Head of Development and Land Regulation:

Yes, thank you, Minister. The building standards review is progressing really well and we are hoping to have reviewed all the relevant standards by the end of this year. We have been talking extensively to industry, but also our colleagues in natural environments and the Cabinet Office to make sure that we deliver on these strategies in terms of what is called the boiler ban, or making sure that we come up with better ways of heating homes, and also making sure that people cannot, without coming to see us, convert their boilers back into fuel-burning boilers. I know industry is keen to get this going and we have had quite a few applications - I know my colleagues in natural environment - for assistance with heat pumps and things like that, so that is really positive. That will be delivered I think by the end of this political cycle.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Can I pick up on something that you mentioned, Minister? Are you planning to relax the planning limitations on listed buildings to allow homeowners to make them more energy efficient?

The Minister for the Environment:

That would be very presumptuous, because there is an election to be held before then, and then there will be an election for Environment Minister. But if by some remote chance I was here in 2 years' time I personally, and I have said it before, think there is a piece of work to be done before we agree the next Island Plan to make a decision between listed buildings over here, saving carbon over here. There are lots of things you can do in historic buildings to save energy, but I think we need to go into further detail and it is increasingly challenging sometimes where properties have old historic single pane windows to try to keep the energy in. Personally I live in such a property. We have got internal shutters everywhere; they work incredibly well. But that is not the only ... there is so much energy that has to be put in to help to heat old buildings. It is not always easy. I just think the next Island Plan will hopefully steer a course for us there, because we need to be a bit clearer about where we go.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Thank you. We will go on to ageing population and age-friendly ...

[13:45]

The Minister for the Environment:

I have to declare, I am conflicted because I am old.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I have some quite specific questions around the age-friendly infrastructure framework. So, Minister, what role are you playing in delivering this framework, and how is this work aligned with the C.S.P.'s commitment to prepare for demographic change?

The Minister for the Environment:

I can say that obviously I was quite involved when the proposition first came, or the amendment first came to the Assembly and where all sorts of discussions went on. I think the decision was we were going to move forward and it was going to go back to the Council of Ministers. I cannot recollect it going back, and inasmuch as I think the decision is yet to be decided as to whether it is going to be myself or the Minister for Infrastructure who will take this work forward. Certainly for myself, not that I do not want to do it, but it would appear to me that a lot of the changes we spoke about during that proposition are infrastructure changes to do with levels and step-frees and bus stops and access

and such. I feel that it probably will be the Minister for Infrastructure, but that work is yet to be undertaken.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Because I was going to ask about progress towards the July 2026 deadline, but there is not progress?

The Minister for the Environment:

I do not think you could say specific progress, but every time ... Andy could talk to more of it, but all I would say was certainly things like bus stops and stuff like that, every time a new bus stop goes in, I am sure that those thoughts are there. I know we had a lot of discussion around the 10-minute travel time, and that was quite important, and I think again that is an Infrastructure one, trying to get these new developments that are close enough to amenities.

Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

Certainly with the strategy coming, scheduled next year, there is a lot of, I would say, just our business as usual within the Environment portfolio, which contribute to dealing with an ageing population, whether that be ... if I start with building and design standards, things that we are permitting and allowing to happen need to be accessible; they need to be in the right locations. So firstly starting with planning and guidance: Island Plan, building bylaws, there is inherently in some of those decisions age and design standards, accessibility, means of access, egress et cetera come to the fore, even indeed around energy use and energy efficiency helps with homes either being cooled or heated. Some of the other work we do, certainly around the housing standards area, rented dwellings, for instance, the Public Health and Safety (Rented Dwellings) Law is specifically about making rented dwellings safe. So there is an element of that which is absolutely relevant to the ageing population in terms of slips, trips and falls within rented dwellings, as an example. Some of the work the department does may not necessarily say: "Here is our strategy" but some of the work we do within Environment sort of is inherent within it that we look after the ageing population as well as other sections of the community.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

So I assume there is delivery plan in place for this yet?

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes. We have not said this too often yet, but I think that is another piece of work which is going to be taken up in earnest during the purdah period. It is a good opportunity for a lot of this stuff that is going to be delivered later next year to not necessarily be delayed, if you like, but we have got a huge amount of work to get through between now and the end of March. The moment we go into

purdah, obviously the input from the people around the table here and others will just drop off the edge of the cliff. Civil servants will have the opportunity then to say: "Right. We have got a couple of months here, we can start to get stuck into this work." I think ageing population work is one of those. As Andy said, a lot of this stuff is already sort of being done. A lot of it will be up, but it is all practical infrastructure delivery things. I do not know that there is a huge amount of ageing population policy to do. It is not like reams and reams. We have just got to implement the stuff that we have agreed in the proposition about surfaces and network public shelters and armrests and things like that.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

But clearly there are considerations in place when anything is happening around the ageing population. Just the last thing I will ask about this then is because it crosses so much into Infrastructure as well, does that make it more difficult to keep this as a priority?

The Minister for the Environment:

It may well do. Andy can speak for the Infrastructure Department, or the Minister himself, but you have already got a phenomenal list of things you are trying to do without the money.

Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

I think they are complementary roles really. A lot of the standards, the policy is set, if you like, within the Environment portfolio, certainly if you look at location of development, standards for new buildings, whether they be commercial or residential. The Infrastructure team often is the delivery department that complies then with the standards that are being set elsewhere, so I do think they are complementary. It is a bit like the environmental agenda as a whole, we need to think about this inherently in all of our work, because if our population is changing, you just need to take that into account.

The Minister for the Environment:

We do have an opportunity. We are doing some work on planning reform and we are out to consultation at the moment for the first stage of changes to the permitted development, the G.D.O. (General Development Order) and I expect to make some changes this side of Christmas on some very straightforward and easy stuff. But we will do further work to that between now and the end of March, and it may be that there is an opportunity to look at some of the work that we need to do for ageing population to see whether that might be included as permitted development in that second review, which will happen after the New Year.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Number 11 on the C.S.P. priorities is about delivering a plan to revitalise town. Can you just tell us what collaboration has taken place between you, as the Minister for the Environment, and your colleagues in Infrastructure, Economy and Housing to ensure co-ordinated delivery of the plan?

The Minister for the Environment:

It is very much an Infrastructure plan, but certainly I have high level discussions. The difficulty for a planning Minister or planning officers is that we cannot ever get too much down into the detail because what we do not want to be doing is to be judged during execution. We can set some general guidance about: "This is what type of thing we would like to see" but when it comes to the very specifics it is up to the applicant, whether that is the Infrastructure Department or a commercial businessman or something, to make an application to our department to be determined. So we have to tread this tightrope between the 2 to make sure we do not put too much detail into the guidance because we cannot be seen to be trying to design the scheme ourselves and then have it given to us to decide whether it is acceptable or not.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

What environmental standards and sustainability goals are being applied to the revitalisation projects in town?

The Minister for the Environment:

That is a good question. I am not conscious that there is anything that is sustainability, revitalisation. Andy has been my chief officer previously, and I know we have discussed ways that we can improve walking and cycling, green areas, amenity areas in town. We have talked about cycle routes, pedestrian routes. I think there is always a desire to revitalise, but as we know, these schemes, Broad Street and King Street, they are not cheap by any stretch of the imagination. We have aspirations for the Central Market, Fish Market and other areas, but again, that is priority work inside Infrastructure, and I guess it would be part of the Minister for Infrastructure's list.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Just a quick one: will the plan to revitalise town be safe and accessible for children and those with disabilities?

The Minister for the Environment:

I think that is all part of the work I was talking about, where when you come to new developments, there is a number of considerations now that we might not have thought about quite so much previously. There is green spaces, there is amenity space, there is bike parking, there is bin storage, there is storage generally and children play areas are vital to that as well. We are seeing increasingly more movement towards thoughts of children's amenity areas and it is great.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Can I clarify? I do not just mean discrete areas for children, I mean the town as a whole to be safe and accessible for children, like a child-friendly town.

The Minister for the Environment:

I cannot think of a specific policy or anything that says that. I mean, obviously we try to do our best, but that is a challenge. Anyone who has small children and tries to take them around town knows how difficult that is.

Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

Certainly work that is in new public realm schemes or highway schemes, there would be road safety audits, those sort of things. It is not just a children focus, it will be road safety audits for all, but we definitely do not have a specific design plan for children. The starting point for Plan for Town sits with the Island Plan. Under the Minister, we have been able to sort of visualise that in a visual tool, showing everybody where developments are going to be taking place. The vast majority of investment in town is not public investment, so there is a lot of private development. Using the appropriate planning obligation agreements to capture planning gain or improvements around them is also really important as part of that. I think the key at the moment is, yes, that decision-making tool as to what is going on, what development sites have we got alive, if you like, and then when we are planning public realm schemes, they are generally planned for all. So I would say it is probably covered in there, but maybe we need to be a bit more obvious about that. So I would have thought there was ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Is there a formal governance structure for the town revitalisation work?

The Minister for the Environment:

There is a Regeneration Steering Group, which was set up, which I do not sit on, but was set up specifically to look at major infrastructure in St. Helier. It has since broadened its aspirations to outside of St. Helier as well. But generally, that was the group of people who would sit on these groups.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

But as Minister for the Environment, you do not sit on the Regeneration Steering Group?

The Minister for the Environment:

I do not sit on the R.S.G. (Regeneration Steering Group), no.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay. That is surprising.

The Minister for the Environment:

Can I just get back to Louise's point very quickly about children? To me, the safety for children and safety for pedestrians in town is to separate pedestrians and vehicles because that is the most challenging, if you like: the more pedestrianisation we can get, even if it is much wider pavements or small lanes that are closed or what have you, the more we can link up areas where people can feel much safer from not having to share roads with vehicles, because some of our pavements are really not very wide.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Could I just quickly ask on your role within delivery of a plan to revitalise town? You have mentioned guidance, and there is a wide amount of guidance that dictates how towns should be developed already. To what extent are you encouraging Ministers who have ambition to engage with your department, with your policy officers about what is deliverable? Because part of having a plan to revitalise town is deliverability, and if schemes were to come forward which were not in line with established guidance, then it would not be deliverable. How much are you championing early engagement with officers who know what the parameters for development are in town? We discussed La Folie as an example in this Assembly last week, but of course there is the Fort and other wider schemes where early advice might change whether something is realistic or not.

The Minister for the Environment:

I will just go back to one of the general points about planning reform, which is we very much want people to engage with us before they put an application in, whether that is a private, whether that is a corporate or whether that is a Government department. The planning team now are very much set up for pre-application so people can come to us with an idea and say: "This is what we generally would like to do. Can you give us some advice? How can we work with you as we develop this application into more detail?" That must go for Government departments as well as everything else, but I accept in certain instances politicians sometimes have great ideas and it may well be that some of these ideas come out in the media or what have you before there is too much discussion.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Given that, are you making it clear to Ministers that the best way perhaps to achieve a plan to revitalise town is early engagement, and are you kind of constantly banging that drum that deliverability requires early engagement?

The Minister for the Environment:

I cannot put my hand on my heart and say that I am. I cannot put my hand on my heart and say I have been overly included in a lot of the plans to revitalise town. But then sometimes there is reason for that, and if the departments are going to the planning team and Andrew for some advice, that would be really the way to do it. As you will know, when it comes to specific applications, I am usually the last person in the line for making a determination so quite often things do not come near me.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

About revitalised town, are harbour and waterfront included in the guidelines for revitalised town? I tell you why I am asking, because during the public hearing for Public Accounts Committee, we have been told that there is no joint vision between 2 States owned entities to develop, so harbour develop according to the vision of the ports and the waterfront develop according to their visions. Do we have joint guidelines for that area?

The Minister for the Environment:

I will be very brief, but I have said this before. When we incorporated harbours, for example, they took over a certain amount of line, when we had a red line that went round and: "Never shall we go over the red line, never shall we come back over the red line." Especially when you throw in S.o.J.D.C. (States of Jersey Development Company) with another big chunk of land alongside, and then you get to greater town area where you have got St. Helier, you have got the Constable, you have got the States of Jersey.

[14:00]

I think we could go back and look to do a better job of that red line to make it much more blurred and maybe have a much better arrangement, where we could chop and change so that the line could maybe move here and adjust it over here. I think it has made life difficult for all of us really to move forward. It is easy for me to say, but it would have been ... I think if we could go back and start again with a lot more collaboration between ports and S.o.J.D.C. and Government and the blurring of the line, I think we might have had more joined-up thinking.

Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment Department:

Yes. They are key parts of town, so I think the quick and honest answer is they need to be part of the plan for town.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Okay, thank you.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Very quickly, and I am sure our panel will pick up on it, because I know we are out of time. One thing about the planning reform as the 12th C.S.P. is to enable sustainable development in Jersey. To what extent - given the title of this was changed by the Assembly to represent sustainable development, not to get Jersey building - have you been able to ensure that the Assembly-driven mandate of the C.S.P. is what is being reflected in planning reform?

The Minister for the Environment:

The very short answer is one might try to do your best in that area, but we have to look wider. Currently development and construction is really difficult. You all know we have got sites all over the place which have either got applications that have been passed that have not been demolished, or they have been demolished, they are not being redeveloped. We are doing sustainable development where we can, but would it not be nice to have a really buzzy construction industry at the moment where we could do a lot more input on the sustainable aspects of the development? I think the challenge at the moment is ...

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Are they not mutually compatible, that you can have a sustainable construction industry as part of sustainable development?

The Minister for the Environment:

They are. The point I am making is you cannot have sustainable development if you do not have development full stop. At the moment, the difficulty we face is the price of money and the price of construction materials is tough.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Eighteen months on from when this was agreed, do you think all your Ministers agree and understand what this priority means and what their obligations are when it comes to agreeing that the Assembly agreed this is the priority and what sustainable development means, or are you still communicating that to them?

The Minister for the Environment:

I might just fall back on what I said previously, that when times are tough, the sustainable, the environmental, the organic or whatever you want to call it, those aspects reduce in priority, reduce in importance, because there is more important things we have to get over the line, health, education and a lot of other stuff as well.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Coming back to what you said, and I am looking at the C.S.P., we have sustainable well-being as a whole in Future Jersey Vision, and sustainable well-being, including community well-being, economic well-being and environmental well-being. As a Council of Ministers, have you got this balance right between 3 parts of the sustainable well-being, and how much environmental well-being was waived compared to other parts of the sustainable well-being?

The Minister for the Environment:

In some aspects, I think we are making some progress. We have spoken about the revitalisation of town and some of that work is getting done. That is environmental well-being, if you like. But I think Ministers all have their own priorities within their own departments, and how much sustainable well-being or environmental well-being, ageing population well-being, it is a lot to think about, and I think Ministers will probably tend to concentrate on their specific bits, if you like, rather than the whole thing.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Thank you very much. Any more questions from the panel? Thank you very much. Thank you for your time. The public hearing is closed.

[14:04]