States of Jersey
States Assembly



États de Jersey
Assemblée des États

Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel

Proposed Budget 2027–2030

Witness: The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries

Monday, 2nd November 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

Witnesses:

Senator M.R. Le Hegarat, The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries

Deputy K.F. Morel of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity, Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries

Mr. W. Peggie, Group Director, Natural Environment

Ms. L. Jones, Head of Environment and Climate

Mr. N. Collins, Head of Finance Business Partnering, Infrastructure and Environment

[15:02]

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

Welcome to this public hearing of the Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Panel. Today is 2nd November 2026, and this is our Budget hearing with the Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries. I would like to draw everyone's attention to the following. This hearing is being filmed and streamed live. The recording and transcript will be published afterwards on the States Assembly website. Please ensure all electronic devices are switched to silent, and if there are any members

of the public here, please make sure that you do not interfere with the proceedings, and as soon as the hearing is closed, please leave quietly. We will start with introductions. My name is Deputy Hilary Jeune, and I am the chair of the Environment, Housing and 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.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Senator Mary Le Hegarat, Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Deputy Kirsten Morel, Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries.

Head of Environment and Climate:
Lisette Jones, Head of Environment and Climate.

Group Director, Natural Environment:
I am Willie Peggie, Group Director for Natural Environment.

Head of Finance Business Partnering, Infrastructure and Environment:
Nick Collins, Head of Finance Business Partnering for Infrastructure and Environment.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Thank you. Just before we begin, we have added a point within the proceedings at the beginning to ask, if there are any, panel members or witnesses to declare any interests that are relevant to matters that are being discussed today. I do not have any to declare. I will ask if my panel has anything.

Deputy T.A. Coles:
No interests to declare.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
I have with the section on agricultural and fisheries.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you. Anyone on the ...? No. Thank you. Also, we have 2 hours scheduled for this hearing. In the interest of covering as much ground, Minister, as possible in the time available, I would be grateful for both questions from our side and also answers could be kept as succinct as possible. We will start with some general questions around the Budget and the Common Strategic Priorities. Minister, given that in the draft Common Strategic Policy we saw that within the summary table of priorities and the supporting narrative that Natural Environment had been omitted from the draft. I know that you have brought an amendment forward following concerns raised by the Scrutiny Panel. Do you accept the panel's intervention was required to ensure that Natural Environment received appropriate recognition into the C.S.P. (Common Strategic Policy), and are you now satisfied that it has sufficient prominence and strategic focus within the Common Strategic Policy?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
As far as I was concerned, we were actually included in the Common Strategic Policy. However, the words were fairly limited and it was not given the full scope as to what I think the panel would have liked to have seen. So, from my perspective, I was never under any concern that we were not included, because I always thought we were included. However, we did not actually have it or the words that were maybe as descriptive as I think you would have liked as a panel.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Yes, and just on that, I think it is very important, and in the future maybe as a visual, not just words, is that when you see the Island outcomes you see all the Island outcomes against the priorities, and Natural Environment is the one that was missing so, yes, words are important, but also to have that in the visual as well, that Natural Environment is considered and important. I believe that the last Common Strategic Policy also did not have Natural Environment as an indicator within the nice visuals that we get at the beginning of the C.S.P. But thank you very much, Minister.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Point noted.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Since our quarterly hearing that we had with you on 23rd September and the lodging of the Budget, are there any priorities outlined when you sent your priority letter to the panel that you feel that now needs to be delayed or deprioritised?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
No, not at all.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

So the Budget points to departmental business plans for service measures; is there a business plan coming and what key performance measures cover Natural Environments?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
We are currently working on the business plans. Obviously, there is a lot of work that has been done in relation to the net zero information, and that is an ongoing thing. Obviously, in relation to business plans for the whole of the environment, those plans are still ongoing.

Group Director, Natural Environment:
We are drafting business plans as we speak. They have been doing it in a short form format compared with historically; it is how we do them. Of course, it is a business plan this year for Environment as opposed to Environment and Regulation. So we are reflecting that in the subject matter that we want to put in. There is going to be one aspiration, one objective, for each of the business areas under our ownership, as it were. I am not entirely sure, if I am honest, when they will be coming out, but we are being pushed for paperwork, so I would imagine it will be coming out within the next couple of months.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
So would we hope to see them ... I believe the Chief Minister has said that they would be out before the Budget so that we could see in relation to the Budget what is the ambition, because of course the Budget is very high level and it only says especially things that are additional to business as usual. We also are looking at the Budget from, can you do business as usual in the Budget that is being set. That is where we would like to see the business plan. Do you envisage, Minister, to have this out?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I am sure that most of the work is already being done. So I think, from our perspective, the aims and objectives of what we intend to deliver will be clearly outlined.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
Could I ask, as you will know, as a new Scrutiny Panel, though we have existing members, looking to find our relationship with Ministries and how they work, you will notice a tight timeframe we are working with the Budget. Will you be able to go away and consider at what stage even any draft works can be shared with the panel to aid in our work on this Budget?

Group Director, Natural Environment:
I think that, if we are honest, that now sits with M.S.U. (Ministerial Support Unit), as I understand it. We provide our own information into the process. My understanding is that M.S.U. are now taking

it forward to finalise. In order to get the final timings, that is probably the conversation we need to have.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
Just to check on drafting; from an officer's perspective in your Ministry, you are done. So when we say it is in draft, it is done from your side and you have handed it over to a centralised function, being the M.S.U. Is that the kind of status?

Group Director, Natural Environment:
Yes.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
Okay.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Thank you for that. Now that you have the draft Budget that has been published, and looking at those business plans that you have said now is draft, do you see any resource or staffing gaps that have been identified and how do you plan to address them?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
We have not got any identified staffing gaps. What I think you will have been provided with is some 4 posts which are in the process of being looked at. People have left their post and we will be looking to refill those posts. There are 4, from my recollection, of those posts. But as I said, at this stage there are no gaps, as you would say.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
You are able to apply to get those posts?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
That is exactly what we are processing at the moment. That is what we are doing at the moment, because you have to go through the whole process, and then we will have those discussions. Those are discussions that I have had in recent weeks in relation to other posts as well.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Okay, thank you. At the last quarterly hearing, you told the panel that separating the budgets would make the Natural Environment budget more secure. Is the department's baseline funding for 2027 higher, lower, or unchanged compared with the 2025 position, or 2026, before Planning and Regulation shortfalls were absorbed?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I think I might ... I would say that the baseline is the same.

Head of Finance Business Partnering, Infrastructure and Environment:
The baseline is the same but obviously we have had some service transfers in and out, which have affected the overall bottom line. So other than that, the movements have been some non-staff inflation, which is allocated by Treasury, and obviously some staff inflation, which will follow through once we have the pay award nominations.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
This staff inflation includes those 4 posts that are out at the moment?

Head of Finance Business Partnering, Infrastructure and Environment:
Yes, it is budgeted. Regardless of those roles being vacant or not, they will receive a pay award.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Thank you. We have seen, of course, there has been an increase, and you have just talked about that. Could you break down what the functions are being transferred into the portfolio and what is the funding that is being transferred into?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
The posts that are being transferred into the portfolio are those staff that were based in the Economy Department of which there are currently ... should be 2½, but I think there is only 1½ that is actually ...

Group Director, Natural Environment:
Two people, 1.6 headcounts.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
That is it; 2 people, 1.6 headcounts.

Group Director, Natural Environment:
1.6 FTE (full-time equivalent), sorry. £160,000 is coming to cover that but they will come to us 1st January next year. So we are not operationally responsible as yet.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
But they are working for us.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
We see that there is this increase or ... yes, it was held by Agriculture and Fisheries' budget and it is being transferred.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
It was held by the Ag and Fish budget, but of course Ag and Fish sat in the Economy Department, and therefore those 2 posts are coming ... those posts are coming to us because obviously they will still be doing the same role as they were doing when they were under a different Minister.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I think importantly as well, that money does not come from the ring-fenced money for agriculture and fisheries, so it sits outside of that and is coming over, which is really important.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
That is what I was trying to work out. To say that this £160,000 is on top of that very specific ring-fence that will go specifically to agriculture.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Yes, because that was what ... the proposition that was brought before the States was actually for money to go to agriculture and not to pay for staff.

Group Director, Natural Environment:
There is £8.7 coming across and that £160,000 sits outside of that.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Thank you for clarifying that. Of course in the Budget for 2026, the panel had an amendment for £656,000. This baseline for 2027, how does that compare? Does that include that amount?

Head of Finance Business Partnering, Infrastructure and Environment:
Yes, that is rolled forward. There has not has not been any change on that so far.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
So it includes that?

Group Director, Natural Environment:

It is worth recognising as well that that £600,000 did not all come to Natural Environment; that was split both down to Regulation and Natural Environment. There was a fairly uneven split of 400/200. We took the £400,000 they took £200,000.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
In a way, would you be saying that this Budget is now ... the baseline has absorbed that £400,000?

Head of Finance Business Partnering, Infrastructure and Environment:
No, that that £656,000 was rolled forward, but obviously that is subject to any amendments in the debate.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
But it rolled forward now split between 2 lines; Environment and Planning and Regulation.

Head of Finance Business Partnering, Infrastructure and Environment:
I do not know if it is split exactly in the detail, but it is not in the summary tables in the Government Plan.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Let me just get that again. If it is not in the Government Plan it means that it automatically is there?

Head of Finance Business Partnering, Infrastructure and Environment:
Yes, so it has been rolled forward from last year. There have been no changes to the bottom line on that.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Okay, thank you. Minister, at your hearing with us, your first hearing, you stated that the environmental prosecutions are sometimes not pursued because of resource constraints.

[15:15]

What enforcement and prosecution capacity is funded in the 2027 Budget, and are there resource constraints do you feel that remain there? I am specifically talking about the Environment, or which sits with Environment, and that enforcement that you talked about in your last hearing.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
That is quite difficult to actually specify because obviously, as an example, we have got somebody that works alongside the States Vet, and they are doing certain roles, but that role is not necessarily

them bringing forward prosecutions. So they have got a role, but that part of their role might also include putting forward the necessary evidence for prosecution. Am I right in saying that?

Group Director, Natural Environment:

Yes. So if you were to split the regulatory enforcement element and then the science and the evidence element, Natural Environment is responsible for the latter. So we will build the information package, as it were, and then we will liaise with colleagues at Regulation. They will then work with us to build a case file, working with the Law Officer or legal advisers, and that is then what gets put to the Attorney General to determine both evidence and public interest. The restrictions on resources that you are describing do not necessarily sit in our camp, but I think do sit within the regulatory camp insofar as the teams that are required to take forward that work have diminished over the years.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Could we understand which teams your specific environmental enforcement would liaise with within Regulation? You might be interested to know we have not yet scrutinised the Minister for Planning and Regulation in his budget, so anything you can tell us about who your teams would interlock with to secure that enables us a better chance to understand his resource and constraints.

Group Director, Natural Environment:

So that would be the enforcement team that sits in the ... compliance team, sorry, that sits under Environment and Environmental and Consumer Protection (E.C.P.).

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

But, of course, within your department do you do enforcement? We talk about Marine Resources or the States Vet.

Group Director, Natural Environment:

The States Vet work with Regulatory colleagues and the Regulatory colleagues will take forward enforcement procedures.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

So even with the animal welfare they would take forward?

Group Director, Natural Environment:

You are right, our Marine Resources team have a different arrangement with the Attorney General's office that allows us to use the Parish Hall system because it gives us a much quicker outcome. For example, if we were to stop a French vessel in our waters, find that they were doing something

incorrect, needed to take them to court, then we want to try to get them to court as quick as possible and get them back out again the next day. Otherwise, we inconvenience them even more than they have already been inconvenienced, which I know some people would say: "So what?" But I think it is just an efficiency that we need to consider.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I think I am right in saying, please correct me if I am wrong, Willie, is the only kind enforcement team that we have in the Environment Department is the Marine Resources team. That, to my knowledge, everything else is basically through the Regulatory team, the enforcement issue regulation.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
So when it comes to the splitters, to take you back to your quarterly hearing resource constraints, are you suggesting that your own teams are not constrained on the resource for your responsibilities in the enforcement chain and that the resource constraints sit within E.C.P. or Compliance, or do you maintain a level of constraint in your offices that make it harder?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
That is an interesting question because I think until such time as we get into the position where we are needing to bring that work forward, I would say that that is the only time to which you will notice that if there is not the resource available to do it, would I be right in saying that?

Group Director, Natural Environment:
Yes.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
But I am aware as well that there are people within the teams that have got experience in relation to investigative skills. I think the thing is, is that that might be something that we would need to address moving forward. Because obviously, because the 2 were together before, you would not have necessarily known whether there was going to be a difficulty. Whereas now, because you are 2 separate teams, maybe that could alleviate a difficulty. But at this stage, I do not think there will be and I do not think you will be, because I have always got a plan.

Group Director, Natural Environment:
Yes.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
So with this, now with the split, is there ... I suppose it is a case of it becomes harder. I suppose the Natural Environment could collect the evidence, feel that you have the regulatory responsibility for

like the Wildlife Law or for P.F.A.S. (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) water pollution or the issues that there are a number of legislation that sits under you, that your officers collect that evidence, but then there is a potential constraint within being able to carry that forward within another department now. How does that work, or how will that work? Do you have like an agreement with the department on how much resources they can provide Natural Environment versus other priorities that they have when they see this constraint? How do you see to ensure that you will push forward potential concerns that are in areas that you hold responsibility?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Obviously I will ask ... in relation to my thinking about this, is that I do not think there have been a huge significant amount of prosecutions in these fields anyway. I think I am right in saying that.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I do not think we have brought any wildlife prosecutions.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Yes, so I think the thing is, I do not think that there are many prosecutions that have moved forward where resources would have been a constraint. But from my perspective, I think if that would become an issue, then it would be a matter that we would need to address, depending on the circumstances and what the workload of the other team was. I do not think necessarily being under a different Ministerial person is going to make a difference because those constraints would have been there anyway, and of course the Minister, which would have had responsibility for both areas, would have still decided whether they wanted to follow this prosecution as a first one to be done as opposed to another. So I do not think you are probably necessarily in a different capacity issue. I think that would have been the same previously under one Minister, but obviously in relation to my role here, then obviously if there are prosecutions that we think should be moving forward, then obviously that is the time to have those discussions with the Minister and say: “This is important because of this, this and this.” As I said, I think there is some very strong capability within the team anyway.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
So you do not need to have like a very specific service level agreement or anything, it is more about dialogue?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I do not think so. I think there might be need to be a dialogue, but I do not think it needs to have a strict memorandum of understanding, as such, because of course different offences will have different repercussions. I think it would be fairly evident, depending on the type of prosecution which

would take priority from probably my perspective, but certainly I would think from the other person's perspective as well, it would be quite clear as to which offences should take priority because it is not something that people automatically ... a lot of the work within Planning, as you know, a lot of it is people are given an opportunity to rectify the fact, and probably would be a similar sort of thing depending on the breaches of other legislation as well. So I think it would be fairly obvious as to which would be your priority.

Deputy T.A. Coles:
Do you think that these enforcement matters should come up to Ministerial level? Because you get to Ministerial level, it starts to feel there that it is becoming a political decision on what you enforce on us.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I would never interfere. I am not saying or suggesting for one minute I would interfere. But I think it would be for the people who are in charge of ... those 2 senior managers to decide as to which takes priority. But it could be that if this did become a resourcing issue then there might have to be some form of service level agreement, but I do not see the need for that.

Group Director, Natural Environment:
Having grown up through a regulatory process, there is a very deliberate rationale for keeping the enforcement procedures away from the Ministerial cohort insofar as there is potential obviously for horse trading/influence and conflict of interest there. So I think to answer that question, probably best that it stays as it is in order to stay within the judicial processes. Also worth mentioning, of course, we have got extremely good working relationships between staff who are operating for Natural Environment and our Regulatory colleagues. They will prioritise, but of course it is the Attorney General who decides whether or not that something is going to go through for prosecution, and that is not something that we would seek to overly influence, but we will provide information into the process as required.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Thank you. I think this all partly came because of the Minister comments from the last hearing about the concerns about resource constraints and enforcement and prosecution, but I understand what you are saying about the split, but maybe it comes back to a little bit about what ... we talk about the department is there to build the specific scientific evidence, and we have heard that there are 4 roles that are that wanting to be filled and then you feel that you will be at the right capacity. We have got the Natural Environment organigram. Are we confident that this is all the posts that are in the Natural Environment, because we do not see at the moment the senior scientific Agri-Environment and

Catchment officer post in here. We do not know whether that is an omission or that does not exist anymore.

Group Director, Natural Environment:
It is a very good question; that is the latest version that we could get from our Human Resources colleagues. But, yes, we would need to put that particular post underneath our biosecurity team.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
So with that, would we be able to just check that this is the final one, just so that we have this overview and then we are confident that there are the 4 posts because we do see ... we feel that there is more within here that looks like there is not ... that there are empty posts than there are the 4. So it would be good to be able to make sure that everything is aligned going forward. So thank you for providing that information. We were also talking before, Minister, about the risk register and the Natural Environment risk register, and I know that you have sent that through privately to the panel. Also, during the panel's review of the 2026 Budget, your predecessor warned that resource pressures could affect biodiversity monitoring, environmental regulation, statutory environmental functions, kind of things that we have been talking about. Like, for example, the Wildlife Law could not be fully administered, that there are concerns that when planning applications are received, that there is that less looking into from a biodiversity perspective, or that lens of natural environment could be looked into planning applications, obviously reporting to multilateral environmental agreements and biodiversity monitoring team was reduced, for example, work on P.F.A.S. and water quality. Do you think that these - that your predecessor mentioned - were concerns in the last Budget? Do you feel that these concerns are now addressed in the 2027 Budget? I know you have kind of said it already, but I just wanted to lay out the very specific areas that your predecessor said were under constraints. Does the 2027 Budget mean that they have been covered and that you are confident about that?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I am confident, but ...

Group Director, Natural Environment:
In short, yes, I would suggest. At the time when that risk assessment was made, we had recently had a bit of an exfiltration of about 4 officers, and because of the incoming recruitment freeze we were extremely worried that we would not get those 4 officers back. Actually, we have managed to get those 4 officers or recruiting into those roles. I think, without exception, apart from the air quality one, which is a concern, we would like to try and push that one forward as well. So, yes, we are in a much better position.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Great. That is good to hear. Do you see any other environmental risks to add to that list? Or now that that kind of feels that that has come down, is there anything else that you feel that there is something to keep an eye on?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

I think the thing is that from an environmental risk, obviously with the changing weather and climate, we are always going to have to keep an eye on our risks because we cannot predict what is going to happen next. So I do think it is important that we keep abreast of being able to monitor storms, monitor the weather and actually keep going with all of the work that we are doing in relation to monitoring that. Of course, we are meeting regularly in various groups to be able to discuss the water, the droughts, and the involvement of all the different stakeholders; the farmers, Jersey Water and all of those. So I do actually think that ... in relation to the environment, you are never going to be without any risk, I would suggest, with the change of climate as it is.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Do you see, and again this is building from the last Budget, we heard that there was not any contingency to the Budget in 2026; is that being built in here? Because you were talking about the fact that environmental risks are a concern and it is unable to predict. We know Storm Ciarán, for example, took a lot of the budget at some point as well and was diverted to Storm Ciarán cleanup.

[15:30]

Is there a contingency in this Budget?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

There is no contingency, but of course it is like with anything, is it not, when some ... the risk register talks about the risk to the environment ... the department, I should say, under my Ministry, but of course there is also the corporate risk register, which is like an over-encompassing. So within all of that, there are going to be risks to the Island that fundamentally one department is not going to be able to fund. I think that would be with anything that was going to occur; a major incident, for example. It is not something that is going to be able to be funded necessarily from the budget that any department has. So therefore, when those scenarios happen, obviously that is when the Council of Ministers and the Government decide whether or not they are going to be able to utilise some of the funding that we have got in other places. Because of course we cannot ... you are never going to have a budget that is going to cover every single possible major incident, major storm or whatever that you are going to get. What would your contingency be? It is an open-ended

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

You would look to the central Government to see the money?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

You would have to if you had a serious major storm and major infrastructure issues, because whether it was the Environment or whether it was the Infrastructure Department or Housing, or whoever, you would have to look at a central amount allocation of funding to be able to rectify that matter at that time.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

To be fair, in my experience in Government these last few years, to the Minister's point, whenever there has been an unexpected incident, Treasury, as a centralised function there, has always stepped in with the necessary reassurance that funding will be there to help us deal with that. So that is my experience so far.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you for that. I suppose it is something that we have just ... we touched on earlier, but we just talked about the panel's amendment to the last Budget as a general amount, but of course that was related to the fact that the Asian hornets work was at risk. Do you feel that the resources available for the Asian hornet control programme is there and that you are comfortable with the amount that is being provided?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

We are continuing the work in relation to the Asian hornets. Obviously you are aware that a lot of those individuals are volunteers. We have got some funding moving forward to the end of the year. Because obviously with Asian hornets, as you will know, it is about eradicating those that are there at the moment but obviously taking those that are closest to the population, the higher-risk ones, and having those dealt with first as a priority. Obviously moving forward we will need to have conversations with other colleagues in relation to health because obviously there might also be potential for health. There is potential here for health risks as well. I do not know if there was anything you want to add to that.

Group Director, Natural Environment:

Yes, I think you are right. The eradication of the here and now is a good way of saying it is a maintenance programme, is it not, we are intent on controlling? What we have got we are intent on ensuring that there is priority given to where the health needs would require. We are absolutely right, there is funding up until the end of the year; that is sitting in budgets. Going through to next year we do have an ongoing budget for invasive species, part of which would encompass hornets

again. I think though it is fair to say we always need to look at what is the most innovative, what is the most cleverest, what is the most efficient way of dealing with Asian hornets? Unfortunately, we sit in a geographical area which has, essentially, given up, quite understandably, because of the density of nests in France, for example. I think we need to try and establish what we want to do with them. Do they become a known and unwelcome pest on the Island or do we maintain what is a very expensive spending programme dealing with all of them, some of them or prioritise the ones, for example, schools, care homes, et cetera?

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Can I just drill into what you meant by your funding there? As you mentioned one, the key drivers that ensured a reason the panel brought forward to reinstate funding from the cuts was to ensure sufficient funding for the invasive species programmes, which, as you say, relies on volunteers. But the message we received at the time was volunteers would feel there would be no point doing something if the backbone of the core infrastructure provided by Government was not there to make it an effective use of their time. You mentioned there is funding this year, there is funding for the invasive programme next year. When you say there is funding for Asian hornets this year, you have a programme, are you suggesting that the funding level for altogether invasive programmes this year is what is next year or are you rebalancing where you are funding?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

Sorry, I think what I have not explained properly here is that we have still got money in the budget that we can still utilise towards trying to eradicate as many of those nests that are left, if that makes sense. We have still got money to continue the programme, to be getting rid of nests in 2026, and then obviously those invasive species. But of course, as somebody said to me the other day who works in this field, it is not only the Asian hornets that are a problem for us as an Island, there are other invasive species as well. But obviously these are the ones that are probably most notable or possibly of more concern to the public because they are something that can sting and make them unwell.

Group Director, Natural Environment:

If I may, that is where it is worth our continued liaison with Public Health colleagues insofar as Asian hornets might give you a nasty sting but they perhaps are not quite as problematic as Asian tiger mosquitoes, which have now been found in the U.K. (United Kingdom). There is a reasonable assumption that they have jumped continent and missed us. There are some very real disease threats that come with those.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

But just for clarity, for where funding it says there is an amount of money that in 2026 has been, in essence, put aside or is considered the budget for invasive species, and a chunk of that has gone to Asian hornets, it may even focus on other things, the quantum that you have put aside for invasive species is not being reduced. You are not, in essence, shrinking how much you are spending on invasive species next year to fund other pressures.

Group Director, Natural Environment:
No.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
No.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
But you may change your focus, it may no longer be invasive species, but we can be assured that you are not reducing the funding to the invasive species programmes in 2027.

Group Director, Natural Environment:
One of the reasons that the cash became lesser at the back end of this year is because that by August/September of this year we would have twice the number of nests than we had in 2025. We had twice the amount of activity which needs twice the amount of payment. We have had to, towards the back end of the year, prioritise funding from other projects, other bits of work and push in the direction of hornets. Yes, it is still there but there is no intention of modifying budgets for 2027.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
In fact we are looking at interns for next year, were we not? We were looking at ways in which we could, potentially, make the money go further as well.

Group Director, Natural Environment:
Yes.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
How do you mean by that, Minister?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
What I mean is that we are looking at how we can get rid of them in better ways maybe by having interns, more efficiencies basically of trying to work out how we can do things in a better way to be able to spread the money a little bit further out.

Group Director, Natural Environment:
Which may be education in-house, using our own people perhaps more, rather than using contractors. We will always need the volunteers, but contractors are expensive and perhaps less expensive might be our own staff.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Thank you for that. I suppose the last question I have is - and it is something that was mentioned in the last hearing but I know that we have talked about it in the last term - of course the U.K. E.U. (European Union) resets, this gift that keeps on giving that we do not know exactly what is coming up next for the summit. But of course we have been told that there is a number of legislation that could, potentially, have to be revised. Depending on how the discussions are, are there resources allocated for this in 2027?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Yes, there are resources but of course we are not the lead on all of this.

Group Director, Natural Environment:
Break the E.U.-U.K. resets discussion into separate packages. We deal with the S.P.S. (Sanitary and Phytosanitary) package and of course there is youth mobility and there is health and defence, et cetera.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Yes, there is all of the other bits and pieces, so, yes.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Yes, we were talking about the exciting things like the S.P.S.

Group Director, Natural Environment:
The S.P.S. element of it, then break that down into 3. We have got 3 separate packages of work. We have one which is policy orientated and how we react to the U.K.-E.U. legislative change. One is Law Office work in order to gap and analyse what we have got in our own legislation, compared with that which we are intent on making similar in order to reach dynamic compliance with dynamic alignment, and then we have got law drafting time obviously. We are comfortable that we have got sufficient resource from a policy perspective, and that is really the only bit that we are in control of and we want to be in control of. I think the other 2 areas, the Law Officers and the Law Drafting team are looking after their own resources. But having spoken recently to the Law Drafting team, they do have a strategy and a plan in order to take this forward. This is literally rolling out in about 2 steps in front of us at the moment. We know at the moment that we are to receive somewhere in

the region of 20, 22 packages of legislation, packages of statutory instruments, in order for us to have a look at them. What those packages will be like, whether they are extremely big or whether they are little packages that will take coffee-break times to deal with, we do not know, but there will be a real mix of them. This is rolling out in front of us. We know from speaking to our D.E.F.R.A. (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) colleagues over the last few days that the summit will be the date that timescales are announced. It is likely at the moment that there will be an end game, a date for dynamic alignment that will be required by 1st March 2028. But that is very much waiting for European agreements. That is the latest thinking on our side of the negotiation table.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Part of the problem there is not knowing the full scope at all; it is still up in the air. I think it is legislative drafting which is going to be the real concern. But there is scope in their programme, they are aware of it, as Willie was saying. It is going to be a case of finding out and then adapting as quickly as possible.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
I think we are asking this because in the last Budget discussion we heard that there are no resources put aside for any of this. We are just checking a year later that …

Group Director, Natural Environment:
I think looking a bit more positive now.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
… at least some resources have been put to this.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I think maybe the resources have been found as it is coming closer.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Yes, that is good to hear. Lastly, we thank you very much for sending the Natural Environment service delivery framework to us. Just, finally, it was developed in 2025, what significant work streams or policy areas have not yet been reflected in discussions that we have had?

Group Director, Natural Environment:
In that document S.P.S. does not feature terribly highly, and of course it does not reflect the team coming to us from Economic Development. But otherwise it covers most of the activities.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Okay, thank you very much. I will pass on to the vice-chair.

Deputy T.A. Coles:
Thank you. We are going to move on to questions around agriculture and fisheries and, as you say, the transfer from Economic Development into the Department for the Environment. It refers to the Better Business Support of the £1.1 million for farmers and fisheries. What outcomes have you seen so far and what performance measures have been used to assess whether it has been successful or not?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I might even ask Kirsten to deal with this because he has been sitting on it for the last 4 years basically.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Are you talking particularly about the Better Business Support Package?

Deputy T.A. Coles:
Yes.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
The £1.1 million from that is designed purely as a subsidy for wages, and that is what it is designed for. It was the only corner of the economy where we had a delivery mechanism by which we could inject money, effectively, to subside those wages to help them with those wages. We know from the farming industry that that has been a success. This was not a part of the package which was about providing grants for particular projects and so on, which much of the package was. This was very specific targeted at workers' wages, and so that is what it did. That money is being rolled into the money, the £8.7 million that is coming forward, so, again, that £1.1 million is there. It was always the size of the funding gap from the minimum wage going up to £13.59 from where it was previously. That £1.1 million was the amount that we calculated that the industry was lacking with the sudden increase in the minimum wage. That is why it is there and it is there in perpetuity. It is delivered through the credit system that the package has and offers, so it will continue.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
How did it specifically help the fishers, for example, the £1.1 million?

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
No, this is particularly for the agriculture industry. It was not specifically for the fishing industry.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Okay.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I think it is important to note that the Marine Support Scheme was something that came about in response to the fishing industry struggles about 2 years ago. It was not something that was planned for initially, the Marine Support Scheme. There has never been a Marine Support Scheme in Jersey. Even to date I do speak to people in the industry who say: "We do not really want to have this scheme because we are very proud and we have never had to have support before." But the industry is going through such a difficult phase that it was felt that it was important that it was there. I do believe part of the Marine Support Scheme does talk to wages but it is a small part and it is, yes, quite simply …

[15:45]

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
Could I just understand more as to you mentioned the breakdown of the £1.1 million, which is on top of a part of the agreement that came from P.54?

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
No, it is part of that agreement.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
You said it is separate to grants and you had a mechanism for delivery.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Yes.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
You mentioned there is a gap in the minimum wage. The £1.1 million appears on page 27 of the annex but could you just explain what that translates into for businesses who receive it?

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I forget the minimum wage back in 2024, it was £11-something. It is the calculated gap from the jump from £11, whatever it was, to £13.59 across the industry, across all the costed workers in the industry. It was that gap multiplied by the number of workers and how much the industry would be … the pressure that that placed on the industry was calculated as £1.1 million, so that £1.1 million

is then delivered. Because the Rural Support Scheme provides credit for the number of workers that you have; it is part of that. It is to help support the wages of those workers, and that £1.1 million is delivered through that credit system, as other parts are …

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
Is that delivered on the basis of the number of workers who receive the minimum wage? I am just trying to understand who this targets because this is part of the Budget.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I would have to doublecheck.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
Okay.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
But I believe it is workers, full stop.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
Full stop, just …

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Because, again, there is a knock-on effect. Minimum wage workers, someone who is on the minimum wage today, when their wages go up that also puts pressure on the supervisors of those workers; their wages have to go up as well and so on. I believe but I would need to doublecheck.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
Maybe that is something the panel could receive in writing as to how the £1.1 million that is considered a separate revenue growth allocation is dispersed.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Absolutely.

Deputy T.A. Coles:
Moving on to a similar area but different scheme, obviously we have the Agricultural Loans Scheme, which is administered utilising Jersey businesses and arm's length delivery partner who provide advice, grant administration, agricultural loan administration across parts of the rural and marine economy. What formal oversight arrangements are in place to ensure Ministers remain accountable for the performance and outcomes and value for money?

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Do you want me to come in?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Yes, you have been running it for a few years.

Deputy T.A. Coles:
Yes, that is fine, just as Minister.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
That is okay. The Agricultural Loans Scheme was obviously set up in law decades ago and we have continued, effectively, the structure that was created by that Agriculture (Loans) Law. We have amended the Agriculture (Loans) Law, and obviously the Minister will be bringing forward some further changes to the Agriculture (Loans) Law in the upcoming Assembly. But that Loans Law creates a loans board, and so the primary body which vets applications and then provides recommendations to the Minister as to whether those applications should be funded or not is that agricultural loans body. The Minister is not involved in that recommendation and obviously the Minister could overturn a recommendation in theory. But certainly, when I was Minister, that was something that I ordinarily would not be keen to do because the loans board has gone through all of the financial forecasting, the business plans and all the other documentation and come to their conclusion. I think that separate independent agricultural loans board is your main area of accountability.

Deputy T.A. Coles:
But do you get provided feedback from that, especially about the value-for-money aspect of it, whether or not any loan or agreement at this point would be value for money, as it is still public funds?

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Yes, I think it could be that you wanted to go round and start assessing all the different schemes that have been done. I think a standard scheme would be something like borrowing money to fund a new milking parlour. When the business case comes in, if you are talking about a milking parlour that is installed today compared to one that was installed 20 or 30 years ago, the efficiencies are significant and the new technology that they use. While we do not go round and make sure that they have received all of those efficiencies over the coming years, what we would make sure is that that milking parlour was installed and that it is being used as their first primary purpose, so that the

money has gone to that. I do not think we check then afterwards whether the greater efficiencies have been incurred because the milking parlour was installed, because that would be quite invasive.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Correct me if I am wrong because the Agricultural Loans Scheme did get adapted and modified to allow for the fishing industry to be able to apply to it.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

That is correct, yes.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

You yourself have described the fishing industry as being in crisis. How much of the 2027-directed support budget is expected to be allocated to fisheries, compared with agriculture and other farming practice? How is that allocation being determined?

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

There is no quota of allocation for fisheries. The only industry which does have a quota of allocation is in the medicinal cannabis industry where a maximum of 10 per cent of the entire loans pot could be allocated there. Everything else it is on the first-come, first-served basis with regard to the applications. There is no prioritisation or ring-fencing between ordinary agriculture and fisheries from that perspective. There is no particular allocation that has been linked to it.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

It is just in relation to loans, you mentioned it, so it is worth us probing.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

Yes, of course.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

The States did agree a 10 per cent quota on medicinal cannabis. Is the result of that decision having an impact on loans? Has the medicinal cannabis industry requested and been approved loans to such an extent that it has reached that cap or is likely to? Because the States may wish to reflect on its decision.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

Okay. I am going back a few months, so I do apologise my information here might not be entirely accurate and, again, we can doublecheck, and if there is a change to what I am about to say we will put it in writing, if that is okay, Chair. The last I understood was that there had been applications

from the medicinal cannabis industry but that none had been awarded. That may have changed since I last checked because I have not before this meeting doublechecked on that.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
Okay. But the last time you checked it was not that 10 per cent of the fund had been used for that and, as such, it was almost close to an entrance, so that that kind of hook had not yet been engaged by the policies.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
That is correct, yes.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
Okay.

Deputy T.A. Coles:
The rural marine economy function administers £8.6 million, rounding up, budget and yet operates with only the 1.6 F.T.E.s (full-time equivalents) since May 2026. What assurance can you provide that the transfer into Natural Environments will not create capacity risk or affect the delivery to farmers and fishers?

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I think there is an element of learning as we go on this, but I think one of the pieces of context that your statistics do not provide is the bringing of Farm Jersey into Jersey Business, which is an important part of this whole team effort. I am being quite honest, because of the squeeze on the staff in the Government we realised that we had to change something with regard to this team. Yes, we have lost one F.T.E.; that did put pressure on the team. One of the main reasons for bringing Farm Jersey into Jersey Business was that we saw how Jersey Business, firstly, can administer grants very well. They are the portal for both the Better Business Support Scheme, that is now the portal for the Agriculture and Marines Support Scheme and they are also a portal for the agriculture loans. We wanted to leverage that as much as we could. By putting Farm Jersey into Jersey Business we now have a really strong agriculture and marine team in Jersey Business, which numbers, off the top of my head, I think about 3 to 4 people. It is by using their resource that we are reducing the pressure on the internal Government resource. At the moment it looks like that is working well, and obviously Jersey Business are basically undertaking roles that 2 years ago they did not do. But I think they are really well placed to engage with businesses. One thing I have said in Scrutiny before when I was a Minister was - and I apologise to everyone around me for saying this - Government is not that great at engaging with businesses and interfacing with businesses. Jersey Business is better placed to do that, and I think that is the right place for it. But we will have

to learn as we go and if pressures appear, where this 1.6 is not working anymore, then we will have to address it, but that work I think should be fine.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Are there any lessons learnt from, potentially, having I suppose it gone from quite a big team, Jersey Business now, which is a positive thing? But going to 1.6 there is a concern that, yes, there could be a backlog of being able to sign off the announcement.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
What we need to make sure is that I think it is quite normal for people in an organisation to keep the information there. But what we need to make sure is that information transfers between Jersey Business and the Government of Jersey, this small team, very easily. Also, that our team in the Government of Jersey do push work out to Jersey Business; do not feel that they have to do it themselves within the Government. All the work that is appropriate to pass to Jersey Business we should do because that is where the majority of the resource now lies. In that sense, what I would like to see - I have not discussed it with the Minister, the Minister may have a different view - would be us focusing in Government much more on policy, legislative development and less on administering grants and that side of things, and I think we have created that structure.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
That concludes my first area, so moving on to leader step, you are doing …

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
It is me, sorry, there are 2 less there. We are focusing on water strategy, water quality and P.F.A.S., Minister. In your letter from 28th October you advised that the publication of the water strategy has been delayed until quarter 2 of 2027. What has caused the delay and what key milestones will be delivered before publication?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I think the thing is, is that it was just a timescale thing, is it not really?

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Yes.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
There is a lot to do …

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

A huge piece of work; it is a huge piece of work.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
… and it is a huge piece of work. I think the thing is, is that it is like with everything, you do not want to rush a strategy and get it wrong. That is why there has been a slight delay to quarter 2 of 2027.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Okay. This strategy then, will it be like a 10-year strategy or you are with specific deadlines or how detailed are we talking about? It is a huge piece of work.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Yes, sure.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Yes.

Head of Environment and Climate:
I think the idea is that it provides a high-level overview across the whole of the water system that looks out over a longer period of time. We need to be looking at a strategic level over the next 50 years. We are talking about things like the impacts of climate change and how that is going to impact on the water resources. Then I think that we will need to look at different levels of detail closer in on that timescale. I think we will be looking at different epochs with different levels of detail as we go out. But it needs to be thinking in at least a 50-year level at the highest level to be able to allow us to prepare for the impacts of climate change.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Is that a priority, Minister, for, I suppose, the policy support for your Ministry to do? But I know that your predecessor wanted to do the water strategy, and one was not able to do it in the timeframe. Is it a priority?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
It is still a priority, it has to be a priority because the climate is changing. We are getting droughts and we need to have a proper water strategy to be able to deal with all of that. As far as I am concerned, it is still a priority for us.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I think it is important as well just from the P.F.A.S. side of it as well, and how that talks of water strategy. I do not know if the Minister has said this I believe publicly - it might have been in meetings

but I believe it is publicly - is Jersey Water are at the moment with regard to the P.F.A.S. side of it, they are trialling different treatments. That is going to be many more months until those trials are completed. Until those trials are completed it is going to be more difficult to know which direction is best to take with regard to that particular issue. The strategy does not have to talk to that necessarily, but I think it probably does to some extent.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I will ask that in a second, but I suppose just coming back to that strategy to ensure that we know that that is coming within 6 months, in that time before will you be consulting with stakeholders and taking a wider view with that? How will you be developing the strategy?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

Yes. We have been having lots of meetings in relation to water. We have obviously met with Jersey Water. We are meeting with ... there are so many different groups. I think it is the Water Quality Group that we met with last week, which includes all of industry, alongside dairy farmers, Jersey Water, agriculture, all round the table together. Obviously officers from Infrastructure, as well as officers from Environment . We have already met twice, since we have come into office, with that group. We have also been to Jersey Water and we have visited to see the trials that they are doing down at Handois in the last couple of weeks as well. Yes, we are meeting with all of those individuals. Because this strategy, it cannot be our strategy. The only way a strategy works like this is that if you have got all of the stakeholders on buy in, and that is the only way that it is going to work, so I think that is critical.

Head of Environment and Climate:

If I can add, if I may, Minister, that also just to remember we talked about the Environment Department business plan for next year. This will be covered in the Cabinet Office; a business plan because it is the policy area of work. It is just to make that link across to where you will see this as part of the work plan for the Minister's portfolio.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Yes, we have been there, thank you. I suppose then coming back to the Assistant Minister's point on P.F.A.S., of course we have still got the report 4, there were 31 recommendations.

[16:00]

Are we going to see a Government response to that? Because of course that would, potentially, feed into your water strategy and when would we see that response?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Yes, you will and, from my memory, it is quarter one of 2027. Yes, quarter one of 2027.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Yes, to understanding those trials better.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Yes.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
But they still will not be completed, that is the trouble.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
You want to be able to see the trials first before responding to the scientific report of those 31 recommendations. You had 31 recommendations presented to you in report 4 and we have not had a Government response yet on how you will be responding to the recommendations.

Group Director, Natural Environment:
My understanding is that the response to report 4 will be early 2027.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
That is what I just said, early 2027.

Group Director, Natural Environment:
Then you have got the engagement in terms of the Jersey Water work by the end of 2027.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Of course this is a Budget hearing, and so is the response to any of those 31 recommendations, because of course we will not see that until the beginning of quarter one of 2027, will that work be covered within the Budget? Is it budgeted, both of course within Natural Environment? But I suppose also have you been working with colleagues in Regulation? There is some crossover work there as well. How does that work in the sense of budgeting and making sure that there is sufficient response?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
In relation to that budget and the P.F.A.S. thing, obviously as we have already discussed, the water sampling will still continue and all of that work will continue throughout 2027. Moving forward, obviously in relation to how we respond to those 31 recommendations, that report is an advisory

report and obviously we could have taken a totally different route and done things in a totally different way, depending on how we would have chosen to do that. We are looking at the whole thing in relation to what those recommendations are and the different courses of action that we can take in relation to those. As I said, the water testing, obviously the water works are doing the water monitoring; that is going to take them 18 months. But we are continuing to work and continuing to monitor what is going on in relation to P.F.A.S. through the water works and everyone else as well.

Group Director, Natural Environment:
That is B.A.U. (business as usual) and there is no specific ring-fenced extra pot of cash to respond to report 4. It will just be part of business-as-usual operations at both Regulation and Natural Environment.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
It is business as usual, okay. Thank you for that. How do you see that the water strategy would incorporate P.F.A.S., the lessons learned from P.F.A.S. contamination? I suppose it is talking about not just water strategy as in the fact that we may be having less water or more water but also, potentially, in the future it is seen as a pollution issue of course, P.F.A.S. As part of the water strategy, would water pollution be discussed as well?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
It has to be because the thing is P.F.A.S. is not going anywhere. It is lifelong, it is not going anywhere. But also you have got other things to take into consideration that can be pollutants other than P.F.A.S., to be fair. A part of any strategy - and I will get the expert on my right in a minute - you have got to be able to manage all of those different things that will affect your water. Of course our water tables are significantly affected at the moment because of the drought. Then of course after the drought you will get lots of water and so then you might have flooding, then you have potential for more contamination.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Yes.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I think realistically all of this has to be part of the water strategy that …

Head of Environment and Climate:
Yes. I think something that we looked at in terms of how we are structuring the work on the water strategy. One of the keys areas is looking at the governance of all the interacting parts in the holistic water system. There are so many interactions and so many impacts of decisions in one area having

an impact on other areas, that we are spending a lot of time sitting down and trying to map out where those interactions are and what governance processes we need to look at and review to work out how to ensure that the decision-making process tackles everything as a whole and how we look at that. What is the role of legislation on this? What is the use of various different levers that can be in there, as well as the whole range of policy levers? Governance will be a key focus in the water strategy.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Since our last hearing you have said you have talked with a lot more stakeholders around water and the water strategy. Are you envisaging then to not review the water standard, the water quality standard that of course was brought forward as a principle in the last term?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

We are not going to be bringing forward the legislation in relation to what happened back end of the last Assembly. But I think it is important for us as an Island, at the moment we have got our drinking water safe. However, like the rest of the world, we are going to consider our options as to how we can progressively, potentially, reduce those levels within the water. That will be part and parcel of what we do moving forward. Because I think the thing is, is what happened in the last term of office was literally this is our timescale, this is what we are going to do now, whereas we will continue to work on this because we need to continue to reduce the levels of P.F.A.S. within the water. But how you do that needs to be investigated further. I think that is why it is important for us to look at what Jersey Water is doing and then looking how we can, potentially, reduce those levels moving forward. But it is like everything, it is about looking at it and managing it in a proper and efficient way.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Exactly, and that reduction will cost money.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

It always will.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

We are just saying that of course the 2027 Budget, therefore, will not have anything specifically for that reduction specifically within it. It has the continued scientific evidence-collecting and monitoring but it does not have anything specific in there to do any work for reduction.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

Absolutely. Of course there are lots of different moving things in relation to it. Obviously there is work that will be done by the airport in relation to contamination of their land. Different people will be doing different things to move it forward and, hopefully, to reduce the levels that we have got.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I think it is really important as well because, in my opinion, Jersey does not have a widespread P.F.A.S. problem beyond what the world has as a P.F.A.S. problem. We have a real problem with regard to the plume from the airport down into St. Ouen's Bay. That is definitely above and beyond what the rest of the world is having to deal with, and obviously we are very focused on that area. But the rest of the Island, and I do worry sometimes that there is messaging that would suggest that the Island has a P.F.A.S. problem above and beyond the rest of the world when it does not. I think all the measures that we take with regard to that wider problem outside the plume area have to be done in a measured manner to understand that we are taking the right course of action, the most cost-effective courses of action and the most effective course of action as well.

Deputy T.A. Coles:
There are questions obviously about the biosolids that were spread at one point and whether or not they contained P.F.A.S., former farming …

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
No, they did not contain P.F.A.S.

Deputy T.A. Coles:
Yes.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Which we knew.

Deputy T.A. Coles:
Yes, and of course with farming chemicals over the years which have contained P.F.A.S. and whether or not they are still registered, that is a public safety and may …

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I imagine my suit contains P.F.A.S.

Deputy T.A. Coles:
Yes, exactly.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Things like this; it is everywhere.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Yes.

Deputy T.A. Coles:
Yes. But it is trying to deliver the public that assurance that our levels are …

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Okay. I think a very important assurance is that as we stand here today Jersey, outside of that plume area, as an Island as a whole does not have a P.F.A.S. problem that is any greater than elsewhere in the world.

Deputy T.A. Coles:
Yes.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Thank you. Passing on to Deputy Curtis.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
I want to focus a little on the Climate Emergency Fund and its role, being obviously in the Budget. The previous panel in its review of the Budget 2026 found that - I will call it the C.E.F. (Climate Emergency Fund) so I do not keep repeating myself, unless you prefer a different acronym, we are happy with that, okay - the C.E.F.'s income base was expected to decline. Ultimately, there are concerns about long-term sustainability of funding. How have you assessed the effectiveness of long-term funding and sustainability of the C.E.F. and how have those findings influenced the Budget 2027?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Obviously the funding that we have got going into this piece of work is in relation to the duty on fuel, which is 9p, I believe. We have got roughly a budget of about £4 million per annum. Moving forward, obviously over the next 4 years we will continue to spend that money and, hopefully, it will not be reduced in any way, depending on what decisions are made by the Assembly in relation to, potentially, taking away money from fuel duty. Because obviously this work is funded through that element of it.

Head of Environment and Climate:

Sorry, Minister, if I could add, if you do not mind, we have seen an increase in the income from vehicle emissions duty, which we also get a proportion of …

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Yes, of course.

Head of Environment and Climate:
… that goes into the Climate Emergency Fund. That has, to a greater extent, offset the decline in the fuel duty receipts that we had thought we might see. The income into the Climate Emergency Fund has stayed more steady than we had anticipated that it might. The decrease is less than we were anticipating.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
It is currently steady, as you mentioned, Minister, at around £4 million and I will dive into the 2 areas you mentioned that are the ways of funding it, which is V.E.D. (vehicle emissions duty) on sales of vehicles or importation of vehicles and on fuel duty. But one of the concerns highlighted was the long-term sustainability of those and the Budget of prior years to recognise that with fuel duty replacement charges being proposed. We asked about this in our letter to you that you replied to on 28th October, but I feel there is still more information we would like to understand. You note that policy work has been paused but not on whether you will be pushing for it to be taken up again or where the policy got to when it was paused last. Do you have a view on the pursuit of vehicle or fuel duty replacement charges on vehicles?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
This does not sit in my remit, it is for the Minister for Treasury and Resources in actual fact.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
This comes to something we will talk about, which is about how Ministers work together. You are …

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
It is an interesting thing, is it not? Because I will publicly say that when people ask for a reduction in fuel I say no because that to me is the income that I am getting in order that we can continue with the net zero programme. Realistically, we are not going to achieve what we thought we were going to achieve by 2030. But from my perspective it is 2050, that is when we need to achieve it. The thing is, is that I suppose at some stage there is going to have to be an acknowledgement. We used to pay road tax, did we not? All our cars had an annual road tax, which was probably …

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
Before my time.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Yes, but we used to have a road tax, and then it was decided that we would move forward and we would pay on fuel, so that the people that are using their cars the most are paying the most. But obviously moving forward then there are going to have to be decisions about how you would replace and what you would replace that with. I suppose as we switch something, you are going to have to find something else in which to charge people for use of their cars.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
I know you mentioned that the Minister for Treasury and Resources is responsible for that, and that you recognise that there is a need to find revenue …

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Yes, I am just saying it is not for me to say …

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
I am kind of skipping and rejig where I wanted to end up asking you about responsibility, but I will take that to the beginning. The C.S.P. has priority 10: "Revise the Carbon Neutral Roadmap to deliver a practical and affordable transition to net zero."

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Yes.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
Funding is always going to be decided by perhaps the Minister for Treasury and Resources but who is responsible for ensuring that number 10, action 10, to deliver that is responsible? I am going to return to my question about fuel duty surcharges, it may be the Minister for Treasury and Resources' responsibility but what is your take on prioritisation of that to deliver your responsibility?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I think if over the next 4 years I suppose basically that funding does start to reduce significantly whereby you are getting to a lower level, then that is a discussion that we are going to have to have about what we are going to do. As you know, this Assembly has never been keen to put charges on people of any type of thing, whether that be fuel duty or the use of a car or waste or sewerage or whatever. People are never very keen to put charges on people. That is going to be a discussion that we are going to have. At the moment we have got £4 million, but obviously at some stage that

discussion will have to come in relation to how we are going to fund it. That might very well be in the next 12 months, depending on how this all changes, as to whether we find ourselves dropping down or not.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Of course it is 9p of fuel duty, which is not the whole fuel duty.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
No, it is not the whole fuel duties.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
The same with the vehicle emissions duty.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
No.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Have you had a discussion with the Minister for Treasury and Resources that maybe if there is the freeze or if there is a reduction, that percentage stays the same because of course that is important also to …

[16:15]

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I have not had that discussion. No, I have not had that discussion. I had the discussion in relation to the amendment that came forward for the Budget when it first came. Yes, there was a proposition that said to cut 10p, and I said absolutely no way. I would not support something that was going to cut the budget that I was getting in relation to this and that was my discussion with the Minister for Treasury and Resources. Moving forward obviously there will need to be some discussions if the money does start to reduce from the 9p.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
The Minister is also right, there will need to be discussions as well in terms of setting a rate for electric vehicles, however, they choose to do it for all cars. If it is specifically non-fossil-fuel powered cars that the new tax pertains to, we do not want to disincentivise people from buying non-fossil fuel cars. I think there is a discussion to be had with the Treasury Department as to where that appropriate level is, although with not having done anything like this before, it will be difficult for us to know and so we will be, again, learning as we go.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
Minister, you mentioned who is responsible, you mentioned work will need to start at some point and the Budget is quite clear that policy work will commence or recommence in 2027 and it will have a focus on vehicle ownership, i.e. vehicle ownership charge. We are very interested, as a panel, on how Ministers work together to achieve their ambitions. Are you going to be driving from Q1 2027 this work so that it can be featured within the Budget 2028?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I am sure absolutely we will be, because I will have a team that basically are very keen to get as much work done in relation to net zero as they possibly can. There is no doubt in my mind that it will be very high up on our priority.

Head of Environment and Climate:
Just if I may add, Minister; yes, the policy officer resource has been allocated to supporting tax policy colleagues to ensure that the environmental considerations into how the charge could be structured front and centre of their considerations.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
Okay. Jumping back to ways that the C.E.F. is funded and we mentioned V.E.D., the latest Budget looks to revert to standard R.P.I. (retail price index) indexation of V.E.D. charges per CO^2 band. Is that your understanding of what it does? It is a 2.8 per cent increase to all V.E.D. rates regardless of CO^2. That is your understanding?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
That is my assumption, yes.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
So were you supportive or did you drive the removal of the escalator provision, as existed in previous years, where the more polluting vehicles paid more increase every year? It ramped up. What was your position within the Council of Ministers in agreeing to remove that?

Head of Environment and Climate:
I think where we are at with V.E.D. is that we have seen a significant escalation, especially in the top bands, over the last few years. We are aware that there is work that is needed to step back and look at the V.E.D. rates across all vehicle categories, and doing that and looking at that as part of the overarching work, policy development work, around the future V.E.D. replacement piece of work together. We need to look at the cumulative impact of any charges around vehicle ownership or use

so the Minister ... in discussion with the Minister, there is a feeling that that work needs to happen before we continued any escalation on the V.E.D. levels.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I think as well there is an affordability issue. Obviously this new Government have been formed and affordability of life in Jersey is one of their key priorities, and so from the perspective of pushing up any further I think that was something which no one was particularly keen on pushing any charges much higher than they need to go. I do think as well, from what I understand, which is quite good news, I learnt recently that in the higher bands we are seeing fewer sales or imports of those cars, which I think is really good, of those more polluting cars.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
Can I just check with Ministers about that affordability? The escalator particularly targeted domestic vehicles. It did not have to apply to commercial vehicles, especially those at Meta Euro 6 category, and therefore provides Islanders a choice to buy ultimately smaller vehicles, more fuel efficient engines down in the lower litreage. To what extent was it considered that we need to provide more affordability to those purchasing vehicles that chose to emit, by virtue of their design, 201 grams or more of CO^2?

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
No, I do not think that was particularly discussed specifically itself, although I am not party to all discussions, because I am not the Minister, but what I was trying to say was the framing of the Budget for next year in general across all departments, et cetera, was about not increasing charges where we had to, and so it is within that framework that I was saying that there was not much pushing in that respect.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
Okay. We are interested in the formulation of the Budget, the conversations that went into the negotiations around the table that you may have had. This is a deviation from policy. It may be one that aligns with a Government ambition to keep fees and charges low. Was there any discussion at any point in time as to the suitability or not of the higher bands, maybe most specifically the ones at 76 to 200 bands and the 201 or more bands having any more than 2.8 per cent, or did it never cross the table?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I do not remember having that in-depth discussion.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

So was that proposed by the Minister for Treasury and Resources? I am curious because when the Budget is formed you will be discussing: "Well, one of our key levies is income tax and vehicle emission duty." Somebody will have put: "We are going to deviate from our position of escalating higher" and if it was not you who was it?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
These things do not get put by the department. These costs are from the Treasury.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
So Treasury inserted this into the Budget?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Sorry, when you are talking about the duties and charges, these things are the Treasury. It is not the department that administered it. It is the Treasury that …

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
I am not saying that is a bad …

Head of Environment and Climate:
I think, if you do not mind, Minister, we did not seek an increase in the V.E.D. so it would be … there are things that would then be taken into account if we did want to seek an increase but the decision was taken to not seek an increase on top of what was proposed.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
So you did not seek it and Treasury put together a Budget in which the V.E.D. was as it looks now. There was no change and so it came out of Treasury. Just so we understand. You can imagine the budgetary process is a black box to many and these are not meant to … they are just for our understanding and for those who are listening.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I know.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
Diving into that Budget, you mentioned the £4 million. The Climate Council report of this year details many things that I will dive into, but one of them is an estimated amount annually to provide for the transition of about £10 million. Did the fact that the published States Assembly report provided by the Climate Council sees £10 million a year, you are collecting £4 million, did you see that come up during the debate on the Budget?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

No, because the thing is that we have an allocation of money which comes from the fuel duty, and that money is allocated to us in relation to the Carbon Emergency Fund, if you like, whatever you want to call it, so from our perspective we have that money so we decide how we go with that money. We have not asked for increases because we do not have the funds for those increases. It is a bit like with any advisory panel or with the Climate Council, they will have made recommendations, however if you are going to go with those recommendations you have then got to say: "Well, how am I going to fund that?" The thing is that this is, as we said, a balancing Budget for a year and hopefully we then may move into a potentially 3-year budgetary term. So from that aspect, we are getting £4 million so we are working towards utilising that £4 million in the best way we can. We did not ask, I did not ask, for additional funding because the whole dynamic was there is not additional funding to ask for.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

I get that.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I think where we are also trying to get is that obviously, and it is something that we also looked at, at the end of the last States term, when there was the freeze on the part of the policy related to banning fossil fuel cars coming in, in the future, to Jersey and the previous Minister said that is not the right policy to make going forward but maybe vehicle emissions duty could be, his words were that there are other levers that we could use around user pays. Of course coming back to the Assistant Minister's points about affordability, most of those cars that are in the highest bands are, and I am just looking at the list now, Lamborghini, Aston Martin, Bentley, BMW, Ferrari, Jaguar. We are talking about high-end cars. Do you not think that it is a lever to be able to encourage those who are the most polluters to pay more rather than it being a way to gather funds for the Climate Emergency Fund?

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

It is a lever that currently, as I see it, it has been brought to my attention that we are seeing a reduction in the sale of those larger engine cars, so it is a lever that is currently working. That in itself suggests it does not need to be changed or played with but, to the Minister's point, we are going to start a 3-year budgetary plan looking at the 2028 Budget, and I think that would be the appropriate place to make these sorts of changes, whereas this Budget was seen as, in a sense, and I do not mean … it is something of a placeholder Budget, I would suggest.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Okay, so taking into account that it is a placeholder Budget …

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I would say your words, not mine but …

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
… we have to reflect that action 10 is suggesting that this Government's ambition is still to deliver a transition to net zero by 2050. The experts who have provided advice have said there is a long-term funding gap. Putting aside next year, Minister, you presented the picture you have got £4 million and your question is how to spend it. That to me would frame it the opposite way around. That is saying that with £4 million how long will it take to get net zero? Arguably you have set a C.S.P. which requires you to work back from 2050. We know there is a shortfall, so will you be planning to ensure that the 2028 to 2030 Budget, which no doubt you will work on quite soon, will perhaps need to seek further money to deliver what you have stated as your aim, which is net zero by 2050?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
The thing is that you can only start to work on all of that once you have established what and how we are going to work in the next few years. From my perspective, as I said, there is quite a lot of work we can do with £4 million but reality again, this is the same as when the roadmap was completed in 2022 there were distinct things: "We are going to do this by this time, this by that time" and what that was talking about was spending huge amounts of money, carbon offsets and all sorts of different things, which quite frankly as an individual I would not want to be doing because you want to be making progress in your own right and doing the right things as a community and as an Island. From my perspective, within this term of office, what we are going to be doing is to do with trying to get as many people on to changing their heating systems from fossil fuels, et cetera, so that is why we are focusing on one particular area so that we can reduce those emissions. I agree with you, the £4 million may or may not get you to 2050 because I do not know how much it is going to cost to get there, but what I am saying is that you need to utilise the money that we have got, which is £4 million. Yes, once we have done all of the strategies, once we have finished all of the work, it may be that we can say that we could do with an extra £2 million or £3 million or whatever but obviously it is very easy for people to say: "This is how much you should spend" because it is very easy for somebody who is not spending it to say: "You have to spend this amount of money", but reality says we have not got it. So we are going to do as much as we can moving forward, and it may be that we have then got to go and say in the 2028 to 2030 Budget: "We need more money and how can we get it?"

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

I think the important bit there, as you said, is you do not know how much it will cost. Neither does the Climate Council. The Climate Council is just looking … it is trying to forecast a future it does not know how much it will cost, and you can use incentives, which tend to cost more, or you can use disincentives, such as taxes, which will bring in money rather than spending the money. So I think there is a long way to play. We are talking about a 25, 24-year journey, and I think to be able to say today: "£4 million is not going to be enough" would be a very difficult argument to uphold because you just do not know, because you are talking about 24 years into the future.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
So you have got 23, 24 years of which you will be Minister for 4 of those.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I thought you were going to say that I could be retired. In 24 years' time I will definitely be retired.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
It sounds, Minister, and I do not want to put words in your mouth, that your aim is to work out which implements you want to drive a reduction towards net zero, so you want to work out how you are going to achieve it before you just say you need to fund it and how much you need to fund.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
What I am saying is that we have a plan. We have a plan for 2027 and for the next 4 years the plan is to get as many people off fossil fuel heating and on to other forms. We have still got all of those incentive schemes going ahead so, from my perspective, that is what we are doing in 2027 to reduce carbon emissions. I do not have £25 million. I have £4 million, so that to me is a way of funding what I think is affordable and we have made agreements as to which things we are going to do and which things we are going to pass.

[16:30]

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
So we can focus if you want on the things you are going to do, which is trying to move individuals, and mostly I believe it is individuals, off fossil fuel heating systems.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Also looking at businesses and how they can transition and being able to help them with that as well. We have looked at various things. We decided, as you will see, that there were 2 things that we decided not to continue doing, mostly because there was not much take-up. Of course for all of

those things there is an administrative cost, so we decided that if we stick and focus with one thing that means that it reduces the cost and we can use the money for the value that it is going to give.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

So you will be using it on the low carbon heating incentive. That is a key spend for 2027 reflecting again on one of the observations that the Climate Council did have. They saw that subsidies were skewed towards the wealthy, so you will have a low carbon heating incentive. You have announced you are extending it. Are you redesigning it or looking at how it is delivered to address concerns that it is "skewed towards the wealthy"?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

I did not know it was.

Head of Environment and Climate:

Maybe if I could step in, Minister. I think when the Climate Council looked at the overall incentives for the whole of the delivery period from 2022, that obviously also included the incentives like the e-bike incentive and the electric vehicle incentive and not just the low carbon heating incentive. The low carbon heating incentive does have a low income offering. It is obviously for people who own their own properties, which naturally splits who is eligible for it, but it is also available to landlords so that their tenants also benefit from lower heating costs through heat pump technology, et cetera. We are continually looking at how the low carbon heating incentive is designed to ensure that we get as many people as possible that fit the lower income brackets into it, but it is very specifically designed to be able to provide that assistance to those who are unable to afford it.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

How is that working? Do we have data on the share of funding from the Climate Emergency Fund that goes on those who qualify through the low income route? Can you share what that share of the fund is at the moment?

Head of Environment and Climate:

I do not have it immediately available, but we can provide that in writing later.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

So can we see then this £4 million that we have from the C.E.F. for next year mainly going to the carbon heating incentive?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

That is the argument.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Of course before it was a much smaller share because there were a number of grant areas or a number of streams of work that took money from the C.E.F. We are going to see most of the £4 million …

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
More focused.

Head of Environment and Climate:
Yes, so obviously the delivery plan for the next 4 years for the carbon neutral roadmap is still being developed, and the Minister will be looking to share that with you and give a separate briefing with you on that imminently. I think until that point - we have not finalised exactly the allocations - but I think it would be fair to say that a significant proportion of the spend at least in 2027 will be on the low carbon heating incentive.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
As part of that you mentioned not just individuals but businesses. Is there any plan for the funding in 2027 to extend towards businesses, many perhaps in the hospitality sector, who rely on fossil fuels?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I think we have still got the work to do in relation to that, to be fair.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
But is that on the table as a piece of policy you want to explore?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I think the heating and that remit is what we are going to focus on.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
Okay. One area of the carbon neutral roadmap that does overlap perhaps with your funding, and was again picked up by the Climate Council, was within agriculture. It did notice that better data and things like manure management and farm-scale initiatives could help. Now, Minister, you now join together the funding support for the rural support and you have your own policy that needs to hit net zero. Are you reviewing in 2027, how the Rural Support Scheme is delivered to align in any way ambitions to deliver net zero in an industry that obviously has a lot of challenges, given its reliance on …

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

I think Willie has probably got a better answer than me, but certainly from the point of view of all of the Rural Support Schemes there is work that is done by the agriculture industries and the fisheries as well, which will obviously include things, incentives, in order that they are managing the countryside better in relation to water supplies and everything else.

Group Director, Natural Environment:

I think it is fair to say that when we receive the Economic Development team coming across to us in January next year we have already received a Rural Support Scheme that is in concrete, as it were, pretty much. However the support scheme ongoing will be constantly reviewed. I think it is a huge benefit that we have managed to bring 2 teams together, or in fact more than 2 teams together, by bringing the departments together in order that we can get a bit of a brains trust talking about mutual environmental benefits and sustainability and resilience benefits for both the farming and the fishing industries as well. Yes, it will always be under review, and I think carbon reduction methods will be part of that conversation around the components of the support schemes. We have got the right people together to talk about all of those issues now. Alongside our policy colleagues we have got environmental professionals up at the building, H.D.F. up at Union Street, and of course the Economic team as well who have got their own areas of expertise in terms of what is pragmatic and possible. Yes, I think in short we will be looking at carbon reduction.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

I think that for the Island as a whole, and certainly agriculture, but it is the Island as a whole we can see the volatility in fossil fuel prices. That is a massive problem for Jersey, it is a massive problem for every jurisdiction in the world but we only care about Jersey here, and from that perspective it is exactly the same for the agriculture industry. The more we can wean them off fossil fuels in all their different ways, and that includes things such as fertiliser production and that involves plenty of fossil fuels, the more resilient they will be. But obviously we need to do that in a way which does not affect yields in the short term so they can maintain their profitability at the moment. That I think is where the Island needs to go, full stop. At the end of the day, the more we have to use fossil fuels to run our daily lives the more we are at the volatility and the whim of other people elsewhere in the world. So there is a strategic benefit to Jersey reducing its use of fossil fuels, which goes beyond climate change.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

You have teed me up for my final question, Assistant Minister, which relates to that wider energy side and ultimately the policy work that this Budget will perhaps be continuing to fund, which is that

of an energy strategy. What progress has been made on the energy strategy and when does the Government expect to publish it?

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
We are working on the energy strategy. There is still more work to be done.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
In fact we have not met with all of the energy groups at this moment in time. We are still due to meet a couple.

Head of Environment and Climate:
I believe we have got an energy suppliers' group meeting that is now diarised for a couple of weeks' time.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Yes, so we have not met with all of the energy suppliers at this time. We have met with a couple but not all of them at this time but that is something we are working on at the moment.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
Focusing on the Budget in particular and the Budget impacts staffing, are you adequately staffed and budgeted to deliver the energy strategy? Again, once you have had that meeting in 3 weeks what is your timeline?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Our energy team are working at fast pace to get it all sorted, so I am quite confident we have got sufficient resources within the energy team.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
To deliver the energy strategy?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Yes.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
The timeline?

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I was going to say the timeline ultimately is the chair's timeline, last I checked.

Head of Environment and Climate:
It is the end of this year.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
The end of this year.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
The end of this year.

Head of Environment and Climate:
But of course there is implementation, I think is what Deputy Curtis is talking about. It is the strategy. We do not want a strategy on the …

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I forgot about the fact that it came from the chair of the panel, because I am thinking energy strategy.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:
I meant the real timeline, not what the ambition is.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
We will get it done by the end of the year.

Head of Environment and Climate:
I think Deputy Curtis's point was, though, that of course we, and we talk about that a lot, many of us recognise that strategies are just pieces of paper. It is the implementation, so I suppose as this is a Budget meeting and wanting to understand that any implementation from a legislative point of view or policy development or anything further that comes out of the strategy you feel that you have got the resources to implement that knowing and understanding very clearly, as the Assistant Minister said, it is a very wide issue to talk about energy and how we can wean ourselves off fossil fuel.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Yes. I am very confident that we have got an exceptionally good team.

Head of Environment and Climate:
I guess that obviously is caveated within a large amount of uncertainty within everything that is going on globally within the energy market at the moment, so in terms of the resources needing to be

adapted and the possibilities of delays depending on what happens and what is needed to react to changes in the market and the price volatility.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

So back on to me. We are going on to biodiversity, countryside and environmental protections and I am going to ask, just so that my colleagues can keep up, my last question first, because I feel it is quite a good one at this point. What do you consider to be the most significant environmental risks facing Jersey over the next 4 years and how are those risks reflected in your departmental planning and budget allocations?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

The highest risks are going to be the changing of the environment from the point of view of the predictability of storms, the damage that those storms will bring and of course whether … and if you are talking about flooding and all of those aspects as well as the risk to the lower parts of the Island can have significant risks, which some of us around the table who have been around long enough will remember before we built the Cavern. So I think those are probably our highest risks along with the fact that, as Kirsten has already said, and so has Lisette, about volatility of our fuel supplies from the point of view that you have got 2 different elements around the world that are affecting fuel prices, fertiliser prices and the other risk, and I am probably giving you more now, is obviously from the point of view of diseases as well. We have seen blue tongue in relation to cattle. That is a significant risk, but of course we were very fortunate that the team at the department have worked very swiftly together with the vet in basically working closely with the dairy farmers so that all of those animals were vaccinated. That is a high risk, and of course you have got another one that has been identified in cattle. There are lots of different things, along with Asian hornets and everything else. In relation to the environment, the world is changing significantly and to say that this is going to be our highest risk is quite hard because you do not know what those could be.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I suppose coming back to one of your risks, and sorry I did not ask you before, but you do mention fuel supply. Listening to the Minister for Economic Development in his Scrutiny hearing, he very much said that he did not feel that the wind farm was something that he wanted to pursue, that 10 years into the future is too far away; there is more, and I am paraphrasing. I have not got the exact words in front of me but that is how I felt his interpretation was, that it was far away and there are more priorities right now. What discussions have you had with the Minister for Economic Development to discuss the fact of your risk of fuel supplies?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

We have had discussions about the wind farm ironically, but off the top of my head I cannot remember exactly who was part of those discussions, but we have had discussions about the wind farm. We are still not doing the work, if you like. We are still in the space but we have obviously got to have discussions with the people around us such as France and the U.K. and everyone else, so it is not a closed door, as far as I am concerned. I see where he comes from in relation to it is 10 years off, but of course we are not in a position where we can do something without others coming into the fray. Kirsten might want to add more because he was part of the wind thing before, but from my perspective I am not out of the picture but we cannot do anything until we have got partners to work with so we are tied in.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Which I understand, but I think it was more a concern with seeing new Ministers and whether there was that drive, whether there was still work going, because it was work before that had to be between the Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries and the Minister for Economic Development and the Minister for Treasury and Resources of course. But it is not just one Minister driving that, and just to make sure that, as Deputy Curtis has talked about before, many of the areas that we touch on in this panel, it is really about Ministers working together because it is not just one very specific focus. It is cumulative.

[16:45]

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

We have certainly had discussions about wind farms. From my recollections, whether he was part of those discussions or not I cannot recall because there was a group of us in the room, but what I would say is that obviously, from my perspective, there are things that have to happen, so we are not in that position. I do not see that as - how can I put it - something that I am going to resolve in the next 12 months. So I think that is probably closer … there are other more important things for me at the moment to consider, but it is not something that I would not consider because I do not mind wind farms. It is not like I am an anti-wind farm person, because I am not.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

I do not know the Minister for Economic Development's views on wind farms either, but I can understand. I did not hear his comments so I am just going through your interpretation, Chair. I can understand why he would have said what he said because at the moment, as the Minister was saying, we are seeking market access to either the U.K. or France or both and until we have that market access the rest of the project will not continue. If I was in his shoes I would also perhaps be standing there saying that the Environment Department are continuing this work, they are happy to continue the wind farm work, and until we have that market access we will not know whether we are

going to take it further. For him to put that as something key to his portfolio, I can understand why he would not. What I would also say is really important, because we are talking in terms of climate change and carbon, is the wind farm project had got to the place where it was about exports and it was not about reducing our own fossil fuel levels, if you know what I mean, emissions. It was very much about exporting, so it had become very much a driver for economic growth, not about reducing our own personal ... Jersey's own fossil fuel emissions.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

So coming back to the biodiversity, countryside and environmental protections where we started this conversation …

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

I have just thrown a whole load of things at you.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

The C.S.P. commits to practical improvements to biodiversity, the countryside and coastal environments. What are your most significant environmental improvements that you would expect Islanders to see during this term?

Group Director, Natural Environment:

I think we recognise over the last few years that linked with climate change we have got a biodiversity crisis on the go still, and we need to spend time and resources on a state of environment report, which may sound a bit dry, but it will give short term and then long term repeated understanding of where you are at in terms of our local biodiversity, and the rationale for doing that of course is because it gives us good indicators of what is going on in our own climate, it gives indications of how our human behaviour is impacting on the natural world, and it also allows us to comply with our wider European and global obligations. That is a really important bit of work that we need to do, but the reason we also need to do it is because it will underpin the development of a biodiversity strategy. So on the one hand we will have an understanding of what it is we need to do … sorry, what the problems are and where we are at. That allows us to then determine what we are going to do about it, and that can then come into policy as time goes on. I think one of the biggest challenges from a biodiversity perspective though is communicating the importance of that activity and the necessity to undertake work to our wider audience. It is something that the scientific community would hold their hands up and suggest that they are not particularly good at. I think that we are very fortunate in that we have got a team that are quite adept at that now and we have got a communications bunch who are also happy to take that forward. That is one quite specific piece of biodiversity-related work that I am keen to undertake.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

This biodiversity fund is a more philosophical point, I guess. In a sense, one of the things that the Island is going to have to come to understand is that because of climate change, species are going to change. I do sometimes fear that people want to preserve things as they were 15 years ago, but we cannot do that. We see that happening underneath the water in the sea where we have got new species coming in. There is nothing we can do about that. That will be happening. I think part of the biodiversity work is also understanding how we promote biodiversity but understand that we cannot always be looking to the species that we knew in our youth because the climate is changing and they are not going to be able to live here anymore.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

That can link into rural and agricultural affairs and monocrop culture in changing what we grow, how we grow it and where we grow it.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

Different products. We stopped growing certain things because they were being grown cheaper in southern Europe but of course now southern Europe is in a position where their climate is changing and they probably cannot grow them and we are getting hotter, so we potentially could be growing them. It is about looking at everything and doing what is realistic for us.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

So you are working on the strategy. Again do we have a timeline for publication?

Group Director, Natural Environment:

2027 is when we anticipate having the state of nature report out and we would have to work on, depending on how the funding looks and depending on how we can move forward in terms of the biodiversity strategy, that is a key piece of work that we want to have done.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

So there is no allocated budget to that strategy at the moment?

Group Director, Natural Environment:

No, there is not, but it is something that is essentially a people, intelligence, knowledge issue and the ability to synergise with other jurisdictions as well. Yes, that will be ongoing business as usual.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

So have you got measurable indicators of what this will look like in terms of biodiversity?

Group Director, Natural Environment:

It will be better in the future. There will be more of it. It will be more diverse.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Just to check, will the Policy Unit be developing that strategy or will it be within …

Group Director, Natural Environment:

We have discussed it with the Policy Unit, the policy team, but we have also got a very wide body of players, including Government, but also including non-governmental organisations who will be coming together to put information into that, but we will be synthesising it into one document.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Will the biodiversity strategy be … just thinking of the water strategy and the energy strategy and …

Group Director, Natural Environment:

Good question. That is a much bigger thing. We will need to work out how that develops into the future.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Could I just check, Deputy Coles asked about the C.S.P. commitment, which does mention biodiversity, and your amendment perhaps strengthens that but it also highlights the countryside and it is about practical improvements. To what extent have you got a plan to deliver and does it require funding to deliver "practical improvements" to Jersey's countryside?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

This is business as usual for us, is it not? From the point of view that improvements to the countryside is not just us. It is the farming community, it is all of the other organisations that work in the countryside, Trees for Life, Jersey Heritage, National Trust, et cetera. We have got 2 days in this month to go out and see all of the things that are going on in the countryside. We have met with some of them but not all. I think the thing for us is that all of those things will improve the countryside by all of those groups working together.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

I guess the question is this is your C.S.P., it is not the National Trust. So the actions must deliver practical improvements to Jersey's countryside, and that is something the Government will be doing either through funding or something to deliver.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

Sorry, I get what you mean. What I am saying is that by working with others as well we obviously will be doing the work that we do, and there are lots of teams within the Environment Department that are out in the countryside dealing with everything on a day-to-day basis. We have got staff within the department, for example, that are out checking the soil qualities and quantities, and there are also within other sections in the Infrastructure Department who are out and about looking at helping to resolve water run-off. They are also making sure that there is sufficient capacity for when there are storms and making sure that everything is in place. That is all about the countryside but what I am saying is that we still need to do some work in relation to all of the other people within the countryside that we can work with and encourage to come on board with us.

Group Director, Natural Environment:

If I may, there is a very real effort at the moment to recognise that we are part of the custodianship of the natural environment in the Island in the department. We have got a package of resources but then we are making very good inroads into conversations with National Trust, National Park for example - National Park who we fund obviously - and so there is a real potential for synergy there. There is a real potential for suggesting what it is we need to do in packages of land across the Island and agreeing how best to get that done that will benefit everyone. That is the voluntary land management benefit. Also of course we talked before about bringing the 2 departments together and synergies with the agriculture industry and trying to get synergies, really good quality mutual benefits out of the Rural Support Strategy, for example. We can get work that we would hope to be done across the environment done to the benefit of the farming community as well.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Sorry, because we are running out of time and we have got more questions, you have talked about synergies but you have also got conflicts. You have talked about bringing partners together but you are also splitting departments here. This leads on to the C.S.P. commitment that includes to reduce regulation and administrative burdens, so how will your department now ensure the Natural Environment continues to provide robust biodiversity and environmental advice on planning application objectives given what you have just said?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

Our department already sits within or are working very closely with those within planning. They have always worked very closely with them and they still are doing so. We have met recently with members of that team and they have basically said that they are still going through their checklists, they are still consulting with each other and we have not had any concerns raised about the fact that that is not happening.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

But the policy direction given by the C.S.P. says it is aiming to reduce some of these regulation and administrative burdens.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

I would say that the Minister for Planning and Regulation, to be fair, has I think also said it is not about getting rid of particular rules. It is about the processes around those rules and reviewing those processes. I think that is a large part of what he intends to do, just making the processes which pertain to make the rules better and smoother for Islanders. It is not just about getting rid of rules and regulations.

Group Director, Natural Environment:

I would agree. I think the rules and regulations may change at the political level, but it is very much our job to sit down with our counterparts in Regulation and say: "Okay, they have changed. How do we do the best for the environment bearing in mind the brackets that we are now sitting in?" and it is a good synergistic relationship.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

My final question then talks about the largest part of our environment, which is our marine protection and expanding our protected areas and the progressing of the 30 by 30 ambitions. Do you, Minister, still hold that ambition to reach 30 by 30 and do you believe you have the right budget allocations to go forward to get that in place?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

Yes, and I do recall from when this was asked a question of me previously that, yes, we do have the ambition to reach 30 by 30, however we would not push forward with it if it was going to have a negative element of it, if that makes sense. I remember saying that; I do not know if it was at this previous hearing or if it was within the Assembly. It is about trying to achieve something but not at the detriment of something else. I think sometimes you can tick a box to say: "I have achieved this" but in fact have you achieved it in the right way when in fact you should have just stopped at 25?

Deputy T.A. Coles:

But also it is making it achievable that the biodiversity within that 30 per cent is good quality marine space and is protected. Do you think you have the budget allocation to keep the investigations to make sure that this …

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

Yes. We have spent a lot of time with the marine resources, we have spent a lot of time with fishers, and I think Kirsten already had fairly good knowledge, but I am beginning to really understand how they work and what they do, and I am quite confident that they will do that.

Deputy T.A. Coles:
Wonderful.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
In the last few minutes I have one last question that we have not talked about, which is about the Met Office and the fact that in the last Budget review we were told that there was an annual funding shortfall of about approximately £300,000 for the Met Office service contract with the Ports of Jersey, and that contract was due to end in 2026 and a new one was going to be renegotiated. I am just wondering, because of course we have talked about the risk, we have talked about climate change being really important, about the weather, and basically the Met Office is the one, and we have seen it very recently that it is very important to have good information to support Islanders in planning the impacts of the weather. Is there still a shortfall? Is there funding for the Met Office?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
I know that my colleague next to me was in negotiation with the …

Group Director, Natural Environment:
Yes, we have been in recent negotiations with the Ports of Jersey, who are one of our major legs of a 3-legged stool that keeps us up, if you like. We have also been in negotiations with Guernsey, both from an aerodrome perspective and a public safety perspective. We are waiting to hear back from them as to their responses to the proposal, the cash proposal that we have put to them. That I would anticipate getting this month so we would be in a position to either carry on as normal or be concerned as to any shortfall into next year.

[17:00]

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
How does that work when we are now trying to review the Budget and come up with also comments to support the States Assembly?

Group Director, Natural Environment:
Not as well as we would like it to, I think is probably how we would describe it. I think we have got lots of big ticket items, for want of a better phrase, that need replacement, that need capital input. We need to work out how those spends are going to be continued through the course of 2027,

because you are absolutely right, we do want to absolutely continue with what is an imperative service. It is a fluid risk, I would suggest at the moment, and until we know what the response from Ports of Jersey and from Guernsey are we are not exactly in a position to know how we want to take it forward.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Would that risk other elements of the Budget? If, for example, the figures come back that are detrimental to the Budget, would that risk the Budget and would we be having a very different conversation than we have just had for the last 2 hours if that comes differently?

Group Director, Natural Environment:

It could do. The Minister has got the ability to move money between functions, and so if there is a shortfall in any part of her budgetary area there is the ability to move across and support. We would rather it was not the case but, as I say, until we know what is coming back from our customers, essentially …

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

You will have noticed that there is a job vacancy within that because somebody has left recently, and obviously that is one of the posts that we are going to be looking to replace.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Yes, but of course for us I think the message that we are hearing in this particular Budget for 2027, and I forgot what the Assistant Minister called it …

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

A placeholder.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

A placeholder or as the Chief Minister said “boring” in last year’s hearing that I attended, I think we are hearing that at the moment everything seems to be okay.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:

We are content at the moment.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Content, but this potentially could scupper the contentedness.

Group Director, Natural Environment:

Managed risks essentially is where we are at, at the moment.

Assistant Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Yes, but it is very hypothetical, the question that is being asked, so we have to wait and see.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Would you be able to inform us one way or the other?

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
We will let you know when we do.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Because of course that will affect how we will be reviewing this Budget, so I think it is very important.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
Of course.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Thank you, and just before I close because I see it is 2 minutes past, is there anything else, Minister, that we have not been able to cover that you see as an important priority for you for 2027? We have covered some big areas.

The Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries:
No. I think there is a lot to do. It is straightforward. I think sometimes people do not realise how impactive the whole of the environment remit is and how it can literally cost you an awful lot of money if something happens. I think that is a fact but, no, we are happy at the moment.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:
Thank you. Thank you very much, Minister, Assistant Minister, officers. Thank you very much, panel, and also to my panel officers for the work.

[17:03]