

STATES OF JERSEY

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DEEP GROUNDWATER: LA ROCQUE AND ST. CATHERINE BOREHOLES

Lodged au Greffe on 8th February 2007
by Deputy G.C.L. Baudains of St. Clement

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

to request the Minister for Planning and Environment –

- (a) to take the necessary steps for the boreholes recently drilled at St. Catherine and La Rocque for deep groundwater testing purposes to be re-drilled using alternative testing methods; and
- (b) to withdraw the conclusions recently published regarding the water samples from the current boreholes until further research has been carried out.

DEPUTY G.C.L. BAUDAINS OF ST. CLEMENT

REPORT

The boreholes drilled at La Rocque and St. Catherine were created for research purposes— essentially to determine whether water from France reaches Jersey.

Unfortunately, the situation is now far from satisfactory –

- (a) The sites were chosen by diviners, but within certain parameters. It was suggested they should be on the east coast, where landowners wanted boreholes, and, in the case of St. Catherine, moved to another area in order to save money.
- (b) The goalposts appear to have been moved. The original exercise was to determine source. That now appears to have changed to proving the existence of deep water – which we all know exists in quantity anyway.
- (c) Halfway through the exercise it was admitted the isotope test chosen was incapable of differentiating between water originating in Jersey and water originating from nearby France. In fact, it is alleged the test result gave the same reading as water from nearby France.
- (d) It is alleged the borehole at St. Catherine provides very little water. Diviners are not noted for failing to produce water, so one must assume moving from the site chosen to a lower one in order to save money is responsible.
- (e) The La Rocque bore is a disaster – wrong materials and procedures have resulted in a bore that, despite being re-drilled, is still obstructed halfway down, contains debris from a shattered lining, and bits of electrical cable (presumably from a failed attempt to fit a borehole pump). As such, as a test site or a supply for water, it is useless.

Clearly neither site, for reasons given above, is satisfactory for definitive testing or supply of water. In the case of the La Rocque bore, I am at a loss to understand the Minister's assertion that it was 'a success'. It is an engineering disaster, and no-one would accept it were it drilled for water supply. Quite how water samples can be taken from a 50 metre bore when one can't access past halfway because of collapse is beyond me. The contractor should be required to drill another free of charge.

The whole exercise has been flawed from the beginning. All parties were required to sign up that they would abide by the results. I agree that was fair, but do not agree that participants should be held to that when so much has changed since the start – not least the fact that the bores are not to original specification, in the right place, or properly drilled. For those reasons, the exercise must be done again – this time properly.

Financial and manpower implications

I believe the La Rocque bore should be re-drilled at the Contractor's expense as it was his faulty workmanship that caused it to be useless. The St. Catherine bore was relocated at officer's request. I understand that not all the funds set aside for this experiment were utilised so I assume the Department has a balance sufficient to cover that one. Failing that, the cost will need to be met from the Department's revenue expenditure.