

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE  
BY DEPUTY J.A.N. LE FONDRÉ OF ST. LAWRENCE  
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 10TH OCTOBER 2017**

**Question**

With regard to the International Conference on Sea Lettuce Management being held on 5th and 6th October 2017, will the Minister outline –

- (a) the total cost of arranging and running the conference (including any entertainment, and grants and contributions to attendees and / or speakers);
- (b) whether any practical solution or result has arisen, or is likely to arise, from this investment; and
- (c) whether there has been any liaison with French academics or researchers (for example, at Caen or Rennes) researching this same subject?

**Answer**

- (a) Firstly I must thank the Deputy for this question and for his attendance at the public conference summary and Q&A session on Friday afternoon. This international conference, the first of its type in the world was well attended and received by internationally renowned scientists who specialise in Ulva (Sea Lettuce). Over 60 delegates attended the main event and approximately 35 attendees were at the public summary and Q&A session.

As the International Conference on Sea Lettuce Management was only held within the past few days the full out turn costs have yet to be finalised however the current estimated full costs are expected to be in the range of £38,000 - £40,000. This covers an initial feasibility study, event planning and work to contact a range of worldwide and keynote speakers, event organisation and venue costs, keynote speaker and overseas delegate costs where appropriate and conference follow up administration costs.

Whilst there was a significant cost to host this event the long-term value in the knowledge gained and contacts made will outweigh the short-term cost. Indeed the avoidance of future unjustified capital investment is an important factor. For example, the knowledge gained at the conference of a similar situation in New Zealand where considerable costs in diverting the effluent water from their sewage treatment works away from the bay, resulted in no reduction in the Ulva problem that they face.

On this point alone, local comparison figures are a £40K conference cost, versus a £10M 'long-sea' outfall extension pipe for the new STW (capital project cost of £69M) plus ongoing additional energy costs for its operation.

- (b) The aim of the conference was to bring together impacted stakeholders and leading experts from varied international backgrounds so that research findings, ideas and practical experiences could be shared and management strategies discussed.

It provided local States members, officers and regulators, environmental action groups, industry stakeholders, interested public attendees and the media with a unique insight into the research and work being carried out internationally to deal more effectively with this ongoing worldwide problem.

These conference aims were achieved.

The conference presentations confirmed that the long-term key to reducing the growth of this algae lies in reducing nitrate levels in streams and groundwater which will also assist the levels emitted through the STW. Locally this means continuation of the work already underway by DoE, Jersey Water and the local agriculture industry to reduce nitrates entering the land through the work of the 'Water Plan' and the 'Action for Cleaner Water Group'. We are, however also affected by high level of nitrates in the surrounding waters and are in part reliant on similar work being carried out in the 'local' French agricultural industry to reduce their nitrate use which feeds into local waters.

The conference also highlighted a number of local non-States initiatives and ideas that are either under trial, being re-visited or under consideration.

On the international level: one output from the conference was the intention for a forum/portal to facilitate further sharing of knowledge between all involved with this problem globally, to the set up – possibly by our consultants, Ricardo Energy and Environment.

On the local front: the setting up of a Sea Lettuce Forum, possibly chaired by my Department, was seen to be required leading to better education and communication on this subject.

The UK, Irish and New Zealand answer to dealing with collected sea lettuce by composting is an option previously considered by DfI, and indeed is already carried out in small quantities by the Department, however the size and location of the available composting site limits the greater user of this method of disposal.

The Department is involved with trial work on another of the other 'worldwide' disposal options which is to spread sea lettuce directly onto suitable agricultural and more work on this will continue in 2018.

- (c) I am pleased to confirm to the Deputy that the significant international contacts made ahead of the conference included several French organisations who are actively involved in research, management and/or re-use of sea lettuce.

Contact was made with senior representatives from:

Ifremer - Dinard Laboratory (Institute Francais de Recherche pour l'Exploitation de la Mer)  
 DRAFF Bretagne (Direction Régionale de l'Alimentation, de l'Agriculture et de la Foret de Bretagne, Rennes)  
 Lannion-Trégor Communauté (Local catchment committee chair)  
 Le Committee de Basins Versantes de Léguer  
 Smel – St-Lo, Normandy (Synergie mer et littoral)  
 and CEVA (Centre d'Etude et de Valorisation des Algues)

Indeed one of the key-note speakers was from CEVA, which is the only technical centre in Europe dedicated to the study and valorisation of algae, and were well placed to represent the forefront of algal research in France and possibly globally.

The key contact at Ifremer would have attended but for a clash of commitments.

In addition, two French commercial organisations involved with the harvesting and re-use of Ulva also were amongst the attending delegates.

Other keynote speakers presented papers on work in:

New Zealand  
 Eire  
 England  
 Wales  
 Jersey