

2020.05.12

**4 Deputy S.G. Luce of St. Martin of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the closure of roads and lanes in Town (OQ.113/2020)**

Has the Minister met the Connétable of St. Helier to discuss the closure of roads and lanes in Town in order to ensure sufficient and safe access for both pedestrians and cyclists; and if so, what actions, if any, have been, or will be, undertaken as a result?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis (The Minister for Infrastructure):**

My officers and Parish officials have discussed these issues and how they should be managed. The relative risk of passing encounters in an outdoor environment such as on-street in Town is low when compared to other routes of COVID-19 transmission. Thus to avoid diverting resources from other COVID-19 related work it is essential that any immediate priority interventions are led by a clinical public health requirement. My officers are liaising closely with public health officials to ensure that this is the case. I had initiated a programme with measures in the Town centre ahead of the implementation of the safe exit strategy level 3 to support the Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As Town actively increases we will proceed to level 2; these will be reviewed and reinforced as necessary.

**4.4.1 The Deputy of St. Martin:**

Is the Minister aware that the U.K. (United Kingdom) Transport Secretary last week announced a £2 billion package to put cycling and walking at the heart of his transport policy, including emergency interventions such as pop-up bike lanes, wider pavements and cycle and bus only streets?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Yes, I am aware of that. I did see the news item on that particular thing. But the relative measures put in place for level 3 COVID, the safe exit strategy, are as follows. We are working on increasing bike lane bike safety with the Parish officials, car parks-wise, we are increasing parking controls. Advisory signs for COVID-19 are being put in place as regarding use of lifts, *et cetera*, not to use lifts in car parks unless it is absolutely necessary, parents with prams or somebody who may be infirm. So it is all part of our strategy.

**4.4.2 Senator K.L. Moore:**

Does the Minister consider that priority to improving pedestrian and cycling access around the Island and its infrastructure should be given in any fiscal stimulus programmes that the Government might present?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Yes, this was part of the Sustainable Transport Policy, which we were implementing prior to the shutdown. Nobody saw COVID-19 coming but, as I say, we are where we are. But this is something we are actively working on as talking with Parish officials. My team are out monitoring traffic flows and I can report that the cycling fraternity is increasing. I believe last month there were over 50,000 cycles reported coming on the cycle track from west to east.

**4.4.3 Senator K.L. Moore:**

As the original questioner, the Deputy of St. Martin, pointed out to the Minister, emergency measures are in place in other places to introduce rapid action points. What action points does the Minister propose to bring to the Island in short order?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Yes, as I have stated, my officers are in talks with Parish officials to bring in this very thing. The Parish itself has the authority to close their roads on a temporary basis should they wish to do so. My officers are working closely with Parish officers to alleviate any flows. Obviously we do not want people walking into roads to avoid each other with heavy traffic, so that is something that is being actively worked on. I would love to have the £2 billion to spend on it but we have to work with what we have.

**4.4.4 Deputy I. Gardiner:**

A project to relocate road space for significantly increased numbers of cyclists and pedestrians are already underway in many cities, such as London, Manchester and others, has been mentioned. The current transport policy in Jersey says we should encourage pedestrians and cycling, current health advice is to avoid public transport as much as possible. Would the Minister consider, in this new age of social distancing, closing some of our roads and streets to vehicular traffic at certain times of the day as it becomes almost impossible to use pavements and observe social distancing, especially in Town?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

I think I have already alluded to that. My team are talking to Parish officials on this very item. But it is a very fine balance between keeping Town vibrant and keeping everybody safe. That is exactly where we are going.

**4.4.5 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Is this not an opportunity to revisit the Sustainable Transport Policy given that we have growing numbers finding the benefits of cycling and walking as a necessity? This is really a chance, as other Governments have done, to invest in a future system that will give the entire population access to a healthier form of transport.

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Yes, since we announced the Sustainable Transport Policy I have been encouraging people to cycle more or use the bus. Obviously things have changed since COVID-19 and we are telling people to cycle more but do not use the bus unless you really have to because of safe distancing. I believe we are on the same track there.

**4.4.6 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Unfortunately the Sustainable Transport Policy and encouraging is not enough. This is an opportunity to provide the space for people to take that action. Is this not another missed opportunity to promote active transport and should we not be grasping this actively, right now, and as a matter of urgency, rather than just talking yet again about the Sustainable Transport Policy?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

The Sustainable Transport Policy was key to what we were doing. We are not missing any opportunities but we do not have a huge amount of funds that we can throw at this but we are doing what we can with what we have. We are encouraging more people to cycle. There may be things coming in the future, we may widen the cycle routes along the Esplanade.

[10:30]

There are lots of things that are happening at the moment. We need to keep people safe and separate at the moment but we are on the same track.

#### **4.4.7 Connétable S.A. Le Sueur-Rennard of St. Saviour:**

Once again, and I say this every time we mention cycling, could they be told that there are rules of the road? A lot of cyclists think because we are promoting cycling and how we have been fantastic that you are on a bike and thank you very much for saving the planet. You may be saving the planet but you are not caring about the other road users and there has been a lot of controversy with people; walkers and cyclists clashing. Would the Minister consider embedding everybody that there is this problem that cyclists are great and it is really terrific but there are rules of the road that we would like them to take notice of?

#### **The Bailiff:**

What was the question?

#### **The Connétable of St. Saviour:**

Could the Minister please, when he is promoting cycling, say that there are rules that they have to take into consideration?

#### **Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

I absolutely agree. There are rules of the road which must be obeyed. Not just roads. There are rules on the cycle path, which come under policing of parks, and cyclists must show due consideration to pedestrians. We have put up signs on the cycle path, especially around the La Collette area, priority to pedestrians at all times. Please be courteous. Please use your bell. You should have one fixed. If people are walking along then please stand aside and just wave people through. Courtesy costs nothing.

#### **4.4.8 The Connétable of St. Saviour:**

He says they should be promoting, they should have a bell and all this sort of thing, but none of these things are written down. In my day we used to have the green cross code, we used to have the cycling proficiency. I know I am old. But all these things were relevant. I would think they are more relevant now with so many cycles on the road and they really are a law unto themselves. I am sorry but I really think we need to bring in registering your bike, maybe paying a tax on it, but could the Minister please ensure that although he is promoting cycling there are these rules that they do have to follow, and follow them up please?

#### **Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Yes, there are rules of the road. I think cycle registration has been looked at several times. It is not really appropriate for Jersey. It would be fine perhaps maybe 60 years ago when there were not many bikes on the road but now we have literally thousands of bikes and many, many hundreds of electric bikes on the road. It would not be possible to have a cycle registration scheme. But regarding rules of the road, we have the highway code, which is not just a code. Much of it is embedded in law, which I am sure you are aware of, Sir, and there are laws and rules that must be obeyed. There are people who cycle on the pavements, with one or 2 exceptions, is illegal. People cycle the wrong way up one-way streets. Again in most cases that would be illegal. The highway code is there and it does apply in law.

#### **4.4.9 The Deputy of St. Martin:**

During this coronavirus crisis we have seen a massive increase in walking and especially cycling. The Minister says his officers are talking but will the Minister make his own immediate emergency interventions to promote cycling and walking across the Island as a matter of urgency?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Indeed. Sorry, we went off on a tangent a little there. But my officers are talking to all Parish officials with a view to doing this very thing.