

20.11.02

1 Deputy G.J. Truscott of St. Brelade of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the maintenance of public parks, gardens and housing estate hedges and verges (OQ.308/2020)

Will the Minister advise what quality inspections, if any, his department undertakes of the standard of work delivered by outsourced contractors who maintain public parks, gardens and housing estate hedges and verges?

Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour (The Minister for Infrastructure):

Under the terms of various landscape maintenance contracts that I.H.E. (Infrastructure, Housing and Environment) operate, inspections of maintenance work must happen on a monthly basis as a minimum but in practice they are more often at least fortnightly, especially during the growing season from March to October.

[14:45]

As has been made clear in previous responses on this issue, both the maintenance work and the inspections have been profoundly affected this year by the COVID-19 pandemic. The lockdown in spring happened during what should have been the busiest time of year for landscape maintenance and work patterns. This has had to be altered to cope with these unprecedented times and the reduction in contractor and I.H.E. staff numbers. As a result of the COVID crisis we have introduced new more targeted mowing regimes which have allowed for much greater wildflower growth. This more sustainable approach appears to have delivered significant benefits to local biodiversity, including pollinator activity. These changes have proved extremely popular with the majority of people who have contacted our department, including the St. Brelade Parish Climate Change Action Group, which has been actively assisting our staff in the monitoring of contract operations. We are grateful for their many positive contributions.

4.1.1 Deputy G.J. Truscott:

I thank the Minister for his answer. The question arises following complaints from residents of a St. Brelade housing estate who were quite frankly dismayed by the way the estate hedges and grass verges were being attended by the States garden maintenance contractor. I am pleased the Minister has responded in the way he has. He did attend to the matter once I brought it to his attention. I was just wondering if the Minister would consider perhaps agreeing to undertake a review of the service level agreements he has with the various contractors involved with a view to driving up standards. Will the Minister also ensure that quality control inspections are ramped up in future?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes, thank you. As I just stated they are at least fortnightly now and obviously our maintenance contracts are on constant review.