

21.06.29

4 Deputy S.M. Ahier of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding deferral of the Vehicle Testing Centre project (OQ.145/2021):

Will the Minister provide a full explanation of the reasons for the deferral of the Vehicle Testing Centre project and the La Collette Waste Site Development project, as outlined in the report R.105/2021 regarding transfers between heads of expenditure?

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

The Vehicle Testing Centre project is dependent on the completion of the options appraisal study. The options appraisal study was delayed due to the pandemic and is as yet unfinished. Subsequently, the Vehicle Testing Centre project has been delayed. The underspend in 2021 is being reprofiled across 2022 to 2024. The La Collette Waste Site Development is a long-term project to construct new waste cells as required by the local construction industry.

[12:30]

The strategy for managing inert waste is to first reduce, reuse and recycle. Where this is not possible and based on our knowledge and understanding of the construction industry, new waste cells are constructed. The operations and transport directorate have reviewed the current demand for inert waste and identified an underspend in 2021, which is being reprofiled across 2022 to 2024 to meet future demand.

5.4.1 Deputy S.M. Ahier:

What consultation did the Minister have, if any, with the political oversight group regarding the deferral?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes, it was discussed at the political oversight group and it was agreed. In fact, it was advantageous for myself and my team. Because of the delays incurred, instead of the money going back to Treasury, in fact it was just reallocated further down the line. So, instead of having to put a case for that money, it is pre-allocated. So it was all discussed in advance.

5.4.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:

With the deferral of this project, does it create any risk for Islanders who want to drive abroad with the standards that we required following Brexit, but they may not be able to because their vehicles have not been tested and standardised in the way that is necessary?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Excellent question; no. We have signed up to the Vienna Convention, as the U.K. did, so the Vienna Convention is more than happy that we are now compliant in that everything is now in train. We test public service vehicles; we test heavy good vehicles. Minicabs we test anyway and taxis we test. Minivans we are testing, people carriers, and 125 motorbikes. So everything is well in train, so they are satisfied. As the Deputy is well aware, we will need extra provision such as international driving licence, et cetera, and possibly green card type insurance. But apart from that we are fully compliant.

5.4.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Is there a point where if the delay continues that there could be the risk of cars not being able to travel abroad because they have not been tested and verified? Is there a point in the timescale that he mentioned where we would need to ensure that this facility is available? If so, what is that point?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Everything is already in train. We have started the testing programme with many vehicles already. The programme is in train. We need bigger facilities to start testing all the cars. So I would estimate we would have 3, maybe 3½ years, before it would become a problem. So we are well within the guidelines at the moment.

5.4.4 The Connétable of St. John:

What impact, if any, has the high level of vacancies in his department had on delaying the Vehicle Testing Centre?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Nothing at the moment. As I pointed out the other week, in the testing centre there were 6 vacancies and that does not cover the whole department, of which there are about 57 across the whole of Infrastructure. But not at the moment. Everything is working perfectly.

5.4.5 The Connétable of St. John:

In answer to a written question, the level of vacancies were much higher than stated by the Minister. Can he confirm the number please?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I will get that in writing to States Members, but I believe it is about 57 thereabouts at the moment.

5.4.6 Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Did the Minister select these projects for deferral himself or was he advised to choose them because of their high value?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I was advised by senior officers that this would be appropriate as they were the ones that had been delayed by COVID. As I mentioned previously, that works to our advantage as this money is now pre-allocated. So it does not affect us at all at the moment in that respect.