

**WRITTEN QUESTIONS TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICES
COMMITTEE
BY DEPUTY T.J. LE MAIN OF ST. HELIER**

ANSWERS TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY, 9th NOVEMBER 2004

Question 1

Would the President confirm that £105,000 has been spent by the States supporting a proposal by the Jersey Potato Export Marketing Board to create a Vodka Distillery on a preferred site, namely a 9 vergée field in the middle of the countryside in St. Lawrence, and can he confirm that this proposal could include bars, restaurant and visitor facilities?

Answer

The Committee received an application for this proposal on 25th October 2004, which has been published in the normal manner in the Jersey Evening Post and the Department's website.

Financial support for investigating the feasibility of this proposal is a matter for the President of the Economic Development Committee.

I can confirm that the proposal includes a restaurant, shop and visitor facilities, but there are no bars shown on the drawings.

Question 2

If the answer is in the affirmative, would the President also confirm that this preferred site is currently precluded from non agricultural development under the following Island Plan Policies -

- C1 Sustainability and Stewardship of the Countryside
- C2 Countryside character
- C3 Biodiversity
- C6 Countryside Zone
- IC9 Proposals for New Industrial Buildings
- IC12 New Industrial developments in the Countryside?

Answer

I can confirm that the application will be considered against the above policies. None of the policies preclude development as such, but there are clear presumptions against development in the countryside, particularly in policies C6, IC9 and IC12. The tests to override those presumptions are high.

The Committee will need to consider what, if any, public interest or other material considerations might exist in the proposal, which could give it cause to make a significant exception to the presumptions against development. However, until the Committee has assessed all the relevant planning factors it would be inappropriate to comment further.

Question 3

Will the President therefore confirm that although the proponents of this factory will or could receive unsold and unsuitable potatoes for no more than 6 weeks in any one year, this could not be considered as an exception to the above policies and classed as an Agricultural undertaking?

Answer

I cannot comment on matters relating to a current application which the Committee has yet to consider.

Question 4

Will the President confirm that his departmental officers are currently undertaking an Environmental Impact Assessment of this proposal, and advise how many man hours have so far been spent carrying out this assessment and the financial cost?

Answer

The Committee does not carry out EIA's. EIA's are the responsibility of the proposer who would bear the cost should the application be progressed, the Department just co-ordinates the process and evaluates the Assessment once it is completed. To date, the Department has spent in the order of one day, (at a cost of £205), covering pre-application discussion about the project and the creation of a scoping document which sets out those issues that we would expect the Environmental Impact Assessment to address.

Question 5

Will the President confirm that there are officers of his department visiting and contacting cattle farmers, riding schools and horse owners to see if there is a local market for by-products of this proposed Vodka Distillery, if so how many officer hours have been spent and what is the financial cost?

Answer

The dairy and livestock advisor spent about 8 hours, (at a cost of £220), including farm visits, with consultants who were looking at the market for 'distillers grains.' Distillers Grains are a by-product of spirit manufacture and are used widely as a protein and energy source in rations fed to cattle and other animals in the UK and other countries. The involvement of the dairy and livestock advisor is reasonable in that it was worth exploring the possible benefits to the Island of an alternative protein feed that could replace expensive imported feed.

Question 6

Will the President confirm that in their business plan, the proponents of this Distillery will need to use -

- 10,200 tonnes of imported wheat per year
- potatoes for only 80 days a year
- 51,428 bottles to be imported daily
- 900 cubic metres of water per day
- 13,200 litres of oil per day
- 70 trucks / lorries a day moving goods to and from the site and the harbour.

Answer

The initial impact assessment summary supplied by the Jersey Potato Export Marketing Board suggested -

- 10,200 tonnes of imported wheat per year yes, but indicated could be grown on the Island
- potatoes for only 80 days a year stated early May to mid July so around 80 days
- 51,428 bottles to be imported daily yes, at maximum production
- 900 cubic metres of water per day yes, at maximum production
- 13,200 litres of oil per day yes, at maximum production
- 70 trucks / lorries a day moving goods to and from the site and the harbour yes.

Movements suggested in summary document are –

from harbour 8 trips per day for imported grain if imported grain is used
6 trips per day for bringing empty bottles
to harbour 6 trips per day for full bottles
during potato season 25 tractor loads per day
removing by-products from site 2 tractor loads per day.

Question 7

In view of the extreme concern of Islanders, and particularly residents of St. Lawrence and St. John, will the President give an assurance that no decisions or otherwise will be made if an application is forthcoming either on this preferred site or any other site in Jersey until that public meetings can be held to seek Islanders' views?

Answer

Consideration of an application of this scale will take some time. The Committee will consider all representations made on the proposal, including those that might arise from any public meetings arranged in the parishes affected. Representatives of the Committee and Department are prepared to attend those meetings to hear at first hand what the local residents have to say. All I would ask is that any such meetings are arranged as soon as possible, as the Committee has a duty to consider applications in a reasonably timely manner.