

### **3. Questions to Ministers without Notice - The Minister for Transport and Technical Services**

#### **The Deputy Bailiff:**

Before the starting gun, I see. Very well. We come now to questions which Members want to ask of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services and you were so quick with your light, Deputy, that you can ask the first question.

#### **3.1 Deputy J.A. Hilton of St. Helier:**

No doubt the Minister is aware that the preliminary findings from the survey that has taken place on the Gas Place site recently have been very encouraging and this could possibly indicate that the expensive digging-out of the contamination might not have to take place. The question I have for the Minister is has the Minister considered, or will he consider, siting the car parking element of the scheme away from that site to enable the building of the green park to happen sooner rather than later?

#### **Deputy G.W.J. de Faye (Minister for Transport and Technical Services):**

I regret to inform Deputy Hilton that the Minister has not seen either a presentation relating to contamination on the Gas Place car park site or seen a report relating to it so I am not in a position to offer any information as to whether the report is encouraging or not in respect of contamination. I think it is worth pointing out that there is question-mark over quite what “encouraging” may mean because it is my understanding that one of the reasons for contamination reducing on a particular site is it has simply moved somewhere else. I also think that in respect of the issues involving the town park, the Deputy may be better placed to direct her questions to the Minister for Environment and Planning because the ultimate decisions will be taken at that department. All I can say is that my department has put forward a £100,000 donation to the funding of the St. Helier Urban Regeneration Task Force which will be primarily directed at a full review of car parking... **[Interruption]**

#### **The Deputy Bailiff:**

Concise answer if you please, Deputy.

#### **Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:**

I am just concluding, Sir. ...Full car parking arrangements around the town and I do not believe any decision is likely to be taken until that is concluded.

#### **3.2 Deputy I.J. Gorst of St. Clement:**

The Minister may not be aware of the traffic chaos that has last night and this morning taken place - commuters coming in to and going from town from the east of the Island. In fact, traffic last night was queuing from as far as Pier Road. In fact, if it was not for the generosity of my wife in allowing me to borrow her scooter this morning, I may even now be stranded on the Inner Road. This has been caused by the road closure... **[Interruption]**

#### **The Deputy Bailiff:**

I am sorry but concise questions as well.

#### **Deputy I.J. Gorst:**

...By Le Dicq, which is due to remain closed for 6 weeks. Could the Minister give an undertaking that his department will review, with urgency, the road closure; that it might be re-opened in at least one direction, morning and evening. Thank you?

#### **Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:**

I very much regret that Deputy Gorst has had to impose on his wife in that way. I am aware of the traffic problems that have ensued. I very much regret the inconvenience that has been caused both to commuters travelling home last night and to those coming-in in the morning. The facts of the matter are that vital drainage, construction work and road resurfacing work has to be carried out. It has to be carried out at some time or another. In the normal course of events our contractors are advised and requested, wherever possible, to work outside of peak hours. It seems that for whatever reason - presumably on the contractors' initiative - that work has been going ahead during peak hours' time. I am aware of the problems that have been caused. The warnings duly went out in the appropriate media. Commuters were warned of the situation and advised to make alternative travel arrangements. I suggest that they do. The basic message is if you are going in the same direction as everybody else, go a different way. I will be consulting with my officers today to see if anything can be done to alleviate the situation.

### **3.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

I use my slot as a supplementary to Deputy Hilton's. Will the Minister put appropriate and sufficient pressure on his fellow Minister for Planning and Environment to release the information in the Arup Rothwell Report on Gas Place and Talman land pollution as soon as possible? I note, in his written answer he is presenting that to the Council of Ministers, but can it be released to this House in the shortest possible timescale?

### **Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:**

I very rarely have to apply pressure to my fellow Minister and I am sure I will not have to in this case. I expect the matter to be presented to both the Council Ministers and Members of the States in due course, as appropriate. I can only suggest that the Deputy would refer his remarks to the Minister for Environment and Planning.

### **3.4 Deputy D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence:**

Will the Minister advise the House whether there are any plans to evaluate the current position of Island-wide street lighting?

### **Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:**

There are no plans of which I am currently aware.

### **3.5 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisssier:**

Would the Minister identify whether he feels the current Connex bus contract is totally stymieing his efforts to reform the bus service? Given the constraints it is laying upon him, was it not unwise to have given EasyLink a contract for the summer, thus diverting more revenue?

### **Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:**

It was a wise choice to appoint EasyLink as an operator for the summer service for a number of reasons, not least of which is that at the time those decisions were made Connex would have been required to buy an additional fleet of bus vehicles whereas EasyLink already had vehicles in place. Yes, the original contract does cause considerable constraint but we are making the best of a difficult job. Despite adverse circumstances, I am looking forward to being able to at least introduce some marginal benefits to services for the summer season.

### **3.6 Deputy R.C. Duhamel of St. Saviour:**

It was stated in a previous debate - indeed it was P.95 of 2005 - that the percentage of household and commercial waste to be recycled in the period 2008 to 2033 (or thereabouts) would be higher than 32 per cent although, indeed Sir, the chart within the body of the report did not suggest this. Indeed, Sir, some local and UK county councils... **[Interruption]**.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

Concise questions, Deputy.

**Deputy R.C. Duhamel:**

... The rate is higher. Will the Minister bring to this House, in short order, a report outlining his intentions for higher recycling rates during the period 2008-33? Also, would he outline what further measures will be taken should the recycling target of 32 per cent by 2008 be met before that date?

**Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:**

It is not the Minister's intention to bring forward any policies on recycling to the House because the House has already approved policies on recycling and we are pressing ahead. As many Members will probably be aware, the results so far of recycling are extremely encouraging. We are continuing to press ahead with the recycling schemes as fast as is feasibly possible. I am looking forward to more green banks being placed around the Parishes at convenient locations, not just for glass but also for paper, and in due course, aluminium cans et cetera and eventually plastic. I should simply point out that one has to be realistic about the level of recycling that can be attained. There Deputy Duhamel and I part company. Deputy Duhamel has a vision of a very high level of attainment for recycling. I take a pragmatic approach.

**3.7 The Connétable of Helier:**

A related question. Islanders would have been surprised to read in the paper that our performance in recycling is apparently higher than England, or so I read. Could the Minister confirm that our figures for recycling include the diversion of demolition materials in the form of secondary aggregate and, therefore, that our figures for recycling are somewhat skewed by the amount of demolition rubble created by the Island?

**Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:**

The figures for recycling can be skewed by any number of additions and categories that you care to put recycling into. For example, some countries that boast very high levels... **[Interruption]**

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

I think the question is whether this particular figure is skewed by this particular item so could you confine yourself to answering that?

**Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:**

Yes, it is, Sir.

**3.8 Senator J.L. Perchard:**

Is the Minister concerned that the total number of personnel employed in the public sector workforce continues to grow year on year? If indeed he is, will he be taking action within his department to halt or, if possible, reverse this growth or does he believe his department to be an exceptional case?

**Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:**

I do not believe my department is an exceptional case. I know for certain that my department is an exceptional case. **[Laughter]** If Members will just briefly bear with me. We have an existing complement of 504.21 permanent posts. I think the interesting feature if we look at the background of the Public Services Department - now Transport and Technical Services - is the total post reductions that have occurred just over the last decade. Since 1991 and to date, the department has lost 174.82 full-time positions which is a record of efficiency way in excess of

any other department in the State. I can commend my department officers for achieving those results.

**3.9 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:**

Sir, speaking last night with my constituents regarding the composting operation, I also conversed with Deputy Ryan who shares the same views as Deputy Martin. Deputy Ryan perhaps would have put this question had he not been ill today. The temporary licence issued in 2003 for the composting operation I believe expires in 2006. What is the intention to extend this temporary licence - if there is - past the target date of removing the composting operation in 2007?

**Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:**

The composting process is an extremely critical process to our waste disposal operations on the Island. Temporary licences, I have to say, will be responsibly issued for as long as they are required. In the meantime, the department, following an agreement by States Members on the waste strategy, is pressing ahead with some speed to secure a location for a new in-vessel composting facility at a cost of £3.5 million. As soon as we can determine an appropriate location for that facility, construction work will go ahead and the way that composting is processed in this Island will become much more satisfactory.

**Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:**

Is the Minister suggesting that the way the composting is being conducted at the Island at this time is unsatisfactory given the amounts... **[Interruption]**

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

You have asked your question, Deputy. I am sorry, my policy was to allow other Members, while there still are other Members and I saw Deputy Ferguson.

**3.10 Deputy S.C. Ferguson of St. Brelade:**

The Minister mentioned that the number of full-time posts in the TTS has now been reduced. Is this a question of an overall reduction or is it a question of a reduction of customer-facing workers? Has the policy of replacing these by machines been value for money?

**Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:**

I regret to say I do not have the information to be able to take a firm view on how many of the staff of Transport and Technical Services have been replaced by machines. All I can say is that these staff reductions represent reductions across the board, both at the manual worker level and, obviously, at officer and senior officer level. I can give an additional piece of information that currently the figures I have offered do not include contract labour, which is no longer used, but do represent some - one or 2 - trainee posts.

**3.11 Deputy A.D. Lewis:**

Is the Minister aware that the present composting plant is causing difficulties in St. Helier, St. Saviour and St. Clement with many parishioners reporting severe breathing difficulties? Does he not think that if this cannot be remedied immediately the plant should be shut down?

**Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:**

No, the Minister does not think that.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

I am afraid the 15 minutes has expired.