

#### **4. Questions to Ministers without notice: The Minister for Planning and Environment**

##### **4.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

Notwithstanding the excellent initiatives he set in train, would the Minister inform the House of a policy he wishes to take in respect of disused agricultural buildings?

##### **Senator F.E. Cohen (The Minister for Planning and Environment):**

I have not formulated a precise policy in relation to the use of disused agricultural buildings, but I certainly will be encouraging the opportunity of trying to find matches, an example being recently in relation to the oyster farm where I will be encouraging trying to match the requirement for an aquaculture building with an agriculture building that is presently disused if we can find one.

##### **4.2 The Deputy of Grouville:**

Would the Minister confirm what priority he gives to the percentage for art policy set out in the Island Plan and if he would consider making it a non-voluntary scheme for buildings over a certain square footage or building cost?

##### **Senator F.E. Cohen:**

I am very enthusiastic to pursue the percentage for art and culture. I think elsewhere it has shown that it has achieved remarkable things in terms of promoting art and culture. I will be looking at this in detail shortly and will report back to the House at that time.

##### **4.3 Deputy A. Breckon of St. Saviour:**

Is the Minister aware of the content of the financial impact survey that was done into the waterfront and what planning implications does he see in reference to St. Helier?

##### **Senator F.E. Cohen:**

If the Deputy is referring to the PWC report, yes, I have read that. I also have some comments on that report. They will be distributed to those who are attending the forum on Saturday and they are self-explanatory.

##### **4.4 The Deputy of St. John:**

Could the Minister advise the House whether the call from certain quarters that we are over-consulting on the waterfront is justified or should we simply let WEB and its partners get on with the project?

##### **Senator F.E. Cohen:**

My view is that we most definitely are not over-consulting. With the exception of the Les Pas site, this land is still public land and it is most important that we achieve on it a waterfront that the Island benefits from and from which Islanders derive great pride. The only way of determining that is by extracting from Islanders what they want on what I believe is their waterfront, and that is the purpose of the present public consultation process and the purpose of the forum this Saturday.

##### **4.5 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

Could the Minister define what he means by 'Jerseyness' in architecture? For example, does he see granite-clad skyscrapers on the waterfront? **[Laughter]**

##### **Senator F.E. Cohen:**

I have not used the term 'Jerseyness'. I have used the term 'local relevance'. I believe it is very important that buildings should fit in their context. In Jersey that context is Jersey. We are all

very familiar with the shapes and materials that make us feel comfortable about buildings in Jersey and my intention is to try and promote an interest in those areas of design in all new developments. Very clearly, there is more flexibility in new developments than there is in relation to developments that are currently in progress, but I will be endeavouring to achieve local relevance as far as possible in all applications. No, that does not mean that I think that we should have granite-clad skyscrapers.

**4.6 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Does the Minister consider that the local relevance in the context of overlooking Elizabeth Castle it is appropriate to have high-rises casting their shadow, whether granite-clad or not?

**Senator F.E. Cohen:**

The purpose of the present public consultation and of the forum on Saturday is to determine just whether Islanders do want to have tall buildings or not. That will form a supplementary planning guidance which I hope will be published in the middle of April and that will determine whether or not we are going to consider tall buildings and how high they should be.

**4.7 Deputy R.C. Duhamel of St. Saviour:**

Have all requests to attend the forthcoming presentation on the waterfront been accommodated?

**Senator F.E. Cohen:**

I am happy to say that everyone who has applied to attend the forum on Saturday has been able to attend. Packages have already been sent out of the first series of documents comprising the Sandover Report and the Department's framework and I understand that today the second documents in relation to the economic benefits will be sent out. The reason that we have changed the venue to the airport is because we had a better response than we expected and I am delighted that we have at the moment over 130 confirmed attendees.

**4.8 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisssier:**

Is the Minister aware that attempts at matching with disused agricultural buildings have for the most part got nowhere sadly because there have been few incentives available to the department? Given that that has been the experience thus far, what other ideas does he have in order to deal with the issue of empty sheds?

**Senator F.E. Cohen:**

I will be making my first attempt at matching a requirement with disused agricultural buildings either tomorrow or the day after. I do not have any other specific proposals other than to try and encourage a matching of disused buildings with requirements in the agriculture or aquaculture industries elsewhere.

**4.9 Deputy J.A. Martin:**

Would the Minister confirm if he has any concerns now that all the waste of the Island is going down to La Colette that the recycling plant is going to be at least a year late in coming on stream? Does he not feel this will affect the target that has been set for the next 10 years for recycling?

**Senator F.E. Cohen:**

It is my job to deal with the planning application and when the planning application comes forward that is the time that I will deal with it. That will be the full extent of my involvement in the plant.

**4.10 Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade:**

The Minister will no doubt be aware of the burgeoning fulfilment industry over here. The OXERA Report on this indicated there would be an enormous demand for large warehousing. Does he have any plans to accommodate this in any way?

**Senator F.E. Cohen:**

No, Sir, I do not have any plans specifically to deal with this. This is not an issue that I have considered and I am not able to adequately answer the question. However, I will look into the matter today and I will respond in full detail to the Connétable tomorrow.

**4.11 Deputy R.C. Duhamel:**

Has a specific budget been set in order to provide assistance for the Urban Task Group?

**Senator F.E. Cohen:**

I am not aware of the total budget, but again I will find out the budget today and I will inform the Deputy later on in the day.

**4.12 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

This may be a somewhat easier question than the last 2. In the last meeting I asked the Minister whether he had seen the report on the contamination at Gas Place and whether he would release that. Can he tell us how much progress has been made with that particular report?

**Senator F.E. Cohen:**

I can confirm that the report will be released today. There is the report itself, which is rather a lengthy document, which will be available to States Members in hard copy. We are trying to make arrangements today to have CDs produced for anyone who wants those as well. There is also a summary of the report which I am also going to circulate later today.

**4.13 Deputy J.A. Hilton of St. Helier:**

The Minister for Planning made much during his election campaign of shared equity housing. Can he inform the House whether he has considered using his planning powers to rezone land to achieve that outcome?

**Senator F.E. Cohen:**

I am very actively pursuing the concept of shared equity ownership and I am happy to inform the House that progress is being made in that there will be a meeting shortly comprising the Minister of Housing, myself and the Chief Minister to discuss all aspects of providing shared equity ownership and other home ownership enabling schemes.

**4.14 Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

I have a question on the town park now, Sir. I directed this question to the Minister of Transport a couple of weeks ago and I was told it was probably best put to the Minister of Planning. My question is in light of the report that he has now informed the House today will be released on the contamination on the Gas Place site, can the Minister inform Members whether he has considered any sites away from the Gas Place site for the car parking side of the town park?

**Senator F.E. Cohen:**

At present I have not considered any other sites. I will be examining the report carefully. The report will be for consultation and at that time I am sure that alternatives will be fully examined.

**4.15 Connétable D.J. Murphy of Grouville:**

I am grateful for the statement made by the Minister this morning with regard to third party applications for property development. I note his answers and I am very grateful for them. Could he give me any idea on the timing which he envisages in proposing a change in the law?

**Senator F.E. Cohen:**

The new law is expected to come in in April and I would hope to look at this shortly thereafter, so certainly looking at it in the first half of this year.

**4.16 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

What is the most difficult issue that the Minister faces at present?

**Senator F.E. Cohen:**

Other than question time, Sir, very clearly getting the waterfront right. It is a very difficult decision. There is a great deal of pressure in relation to schemes that are going to come forward and it is very important that the waterfront is a balance that delivers pride to the community and economic success and benefit to the Island.

**4.17 Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:**

Would the Minister be pleased to know that the Urban Task Force was funded to the tune of £200,000, £100,000 from the car park trading account by the former Environment and Public Services Committee, and the balance of it from the Millennium Fund from the Chief Minister's Department? Would he be pleased to know that the Urban Task Force is well funded and well on its way with its work? **[Laughter]**

**The Bailiff:**

If there are no further questions for the Minister of Planning, I will draw the second question period to a close.