

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
BY THE CONNETABLE OF ST. HELIER**

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 25th APRIL 2006

Question

Would the Minister inform members –

- (a) whether an assessment was carried out on the potential impact of composting on the health of nearby residents prior to moving the compost site from St Mary to St Helier and, if not, the reasons why?
- (b) the number and type of complaints received by the Environmental Health Department concerning nuisance odours both while composting was carried out at St. Mary and since the operation was moved to St. Helier, and what steps, if any, have been taken in response to those complaints?
- (c) whether there has been any evidence of fungal spores produced from the composting site which could be injurious to human health?
- (d) whether equipment has recently been purchased designed to monitor odour levels and, if so, whether such equipment will be used in respect of the temporary composting site at Havre des Pas?

Answers

Would the Minister inform members –

- (a) **whether an assessment was carried out on the potential impact of composting on the health of nearby residents prior to moving the compost site from St Mary to St Helier and, if not, the reasons why?**

The Health Protection Team were consulted by the Planning and Environment Committee on the application to move the timber and green waste reception and recycling centre to La Collette on the 12 November 2002. Planning Application Number P/2002/2597.

The response which was sent stated “The whole aspect of timber and green waste reception/recycling, as well as composting, on the island needs to be reviewed to ascertain whether the current systems of operation are the best practical environmental option in the light of the volume of waste derived. This department recommends a complete review of the issues surrounding these aspects. This should include a health impact assessment in (which - typographical omission error) health effects are thoroughly investigated”.

As far as the Department is aware that did not take place at the time of the application to Planning although members will be aware that the work to implement the islands waste strategy is ongoing. Officers of the Transport and Technical Services Department and my own Health Protection staff are currently engaged in setting up a Health Impact Assessment for the proposed composting regime and this will include key stakeholders and residents representatives.

- (b) **the number and type of complaints received by the Environmental Health Department concerning nuisance odours both while composting was carried out at St. Mary and since the operation was moved to St. Helier, and what steps, if any, have been taken in response to those complaints?**

Crabbé, St Mary

There are few remaining records of complaints to the Health and Social Services Department relating to issues at

Crabbé but it is clear that there were continual references from 1994 onwards which are documented in letters between the Environmental Health Department and the Agricultural and Fisheries Committee particularly after the introduction of potato waste dumping at Crabbé.

We can however, confirm four written complaints in 1997, one written complaint in 1999 and one written complaint in 2002.

La Collette

Complaints to the Health Protection Department first occurred in August 2004 and since that time through to the end of March 2006 there have been a total of twenty-one complaints received from nine different complainants including two from representatives of the Parish of St Helier. One resident completed an odour nuisance diary over the period of August/September 2004.

All of the complaints relate to alleged odour from the composting site, but investigations of those complaints including visits by officers to the complainants premises, Havre des Pas area and the composting site have revealed that there have been two occasions when odour from the compost site have been confirmed and four occasions when the source has been confirmed as seaweed.

(c) Whether there has been any evidence of fungal spores produced from the composting site which could be injurious to human health?

The former Public Services Department has undertaken monitoring around both the Crabbe site at St Mary and the La Collette site. These investigations have involved Bio-aerosol monitoring looking for Fungi, Thermophilic actinomycetes and bacteria downwind of the sites and in the case of Crabbe comparing with a control site. The results were found to be in line with those investigations into open windrow composting undertaken on behalf of the UK Government by the Environment Agency, whereby levels of these materials can be found in decreasing levels from the site with background levels being reached within a distance of 250 metres from the site.

(d) Whether equipment has recently been purchased designed to monitor odour levels and, if so, whether such equipment will be used in respect of the temporary composting site at Havre des Pas?

Answer

The Health Protection Team has purchased equipment to enable the monitoring of bio-aerosols which will be used for amongst other things the monitoring of emissions around La Collette composting site. There is not currently commercially available suitable equipment for the monitoring of odours and reliance will continue to be placed on the olfactory senses of officers and the evidence base of meteorological data from the Airport.