

**WRITTEN QUESTIONS TO THE MINISTER FOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT
BY DEPUTY G.C.L. BAUDAINS OF ST. CLEMENT**

ANSWERS TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY, 24th OCTOBER 2006

Question 1

Would the Minister advise members –

- (a) whether all aspects of the meteorological infrastructure, such as the weather radar, are currently fully operational and, if not, why not?
- (b) what processes are in place to monitor quality of local weather forecasts and compare their accuracy with other jurisdictions?
- (c) how much of the data used in local forecasting is bought in and how much is locally generated?

Answer

- (a) Apart from the wave rider buoy situated 6 miles south of Corbière, all aspects of the Meteorological infrastructure, including the weather radar are fully operational. The wave rider buoy was set adrift from its mooring last month and is currently at St. Helier Harbour awaiting a replacement mooring attachment before being redeployed.

It should also be noted that one member of staff is on indefinite sick leave, having an impact on the routine administrative work of the Department while administrative staff cover the operational roster.

- (b) Verification schemes are in place to monitor today's forecast produced at 09.00 and tomorrow's forecast published in the Jersey Evening Post. For 2005, accuracy was assessed at 95.7% for today's forecast and 91.9% for tomorrow's. A similar scheme to verify the Guernsey Press forecast is to be introduced next year.

Wind warnings are assessed against a criteria of a wind of F6, or more, likely within the Channel Island area. For 2005, the assessment showed 88.5% correct warnings were issued. Only 2.2% of events (that is, winds of F6 or more) were missed and the average lead time between the issue of a warning and a strong wind occurring was 10.7 hours compared to the Harbour Office's requirement of 6 hours notice.

Forecasts for Jersey, Guernsey and Alderney Airports are routinely verified, using a scheme developed by the United Kingdom Meteorological Office. The target score set by the UK is 84%. Results for the twelve months ending August 2006 show an overall score of Jersey 87.4%, Guernsey 87.3%, Alderney 88.1%.

Accuracy with other jurisdictions is difficult to compare as -

- (i) Most verification statistics produced by the larger Meteorological services are typically based on the accuracy of computer models to predict, for example, the surface pressure at a number of specified locations as opposed to textual forecasts issued to the public.
 - (ii) For comparisons to be meaningful they must: compare like with like; be over the same time period; and apply to the same location.
 - (iii) Jersey Met. does not have the resources to collate and verify other jurisdiction forecasts, for example those produced by the United Kingdom Meteorological Office on BBC Ceefax or the Internet.
- (c) No data is purchased by the Department. The business of public service meteorology operates through the

free exchange of data between the National Meteorological Services. Jersey Met. receives the vast majority of the data (over 95%) used in producing the local forecast from the United Kingdom Met. Office and to a lesser extent from Météo France. In return, data from the Weather Radar and other local observations are sent to the United Kingdom Met. Office and Météo France. Jersey also has access to data produced by the European Centre for Medium range Weather Forecasting (ECMWF) in Reading, England and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the USA. Without this free exchange of data Jersey would be faced with a bill of some £250,000 to £750,000 per year to receive the equivalent detailed data needed to complete the local forecast.

Question 2

- (a) Would the Minister inform members what control, if any, is in place over Jersey forecasts supplied from the United Kingdom through Jersey Met and whether local purchasers of those forecasts have any recompense when the system fails?
- (b) Would the Minister investigate why a customer who purchased a forecast from Jersey Met for the weekend of 14th/15th October 2006 was sent a forecast for Wednesday 13th and Thursday 14th September 2006 and, having complained, was told by Jersey Met that it was nothing to do with Jersey because the fault was in the UK?

Answer

- (a) No Jersey forecasts are supplied from the United Kingdom through Jersey Met. Forecasts are supplied from Jersey Met through the United Kingdom Met. Office, as part of the UK Met. Office's MarineCall and MetFAX Marine service operated by I-Touch. This is a fully automated service in which forecasts are faxed to a central fax server. Customers receive either a fax or prerecorded forecast by dialling into the system. Apart from monitoring the validity of the outgoing forecast to the service, no other local controls are in place.

A 20% royalty is received by Jersey Met for this service, all other revenue being shared between I-Touch and the UK Met. Office.

The service was set up in 1994 as an extension to the UK Met. Office's MarineCall and MetFAX Marine services to include the Channel Islands. It was seen as a cost effective method of providing a faxback service without the need for expensive infrastructure at Jersey Met. This has now been largely superseded by our own credit card Weather TO GO! service available to callers in the UK, France and the Channel Islands. Full controls for this service are in place to ensure customers receive the correct forecast.

- (b) Yes - the Minister will investigate.