

2.11 Deputy S. Power of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services regarding the construction of facilities for Connex drivers on the Albert Pier:

Can the Minister inform the Assembly that following reports into the explosion at the Buncefield Oil Storage Depot at Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire on 11th December 2005, he has decided to move part of the Connex bus operation to the top of the Albert Pier and, if so, whether he has authorised the construction facilities there for Connex drivers? I know he has answered part of this already. Thank you, Sir.

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

Although the review is not yet complete, I can confirm that phase one of the hazards review of the La Collette Fuel Farm quantified the impact of a potential vapour cloud explosion following the issuing of a consultation paper by the U.K. Health and Safety Executive into possible stricter land use planning arrangements around fuel storage facilities in response to the Buncefield explosion. Until such a time that the U.K. Health and Safety Executive has concluded its consultation and determined which land use planning zones will apply around fuel farms, the hazard review group have advised the Planning Authority that any new development within the vicinity of the fuel farm which increases the population density should be precluded unless a detailed site-specific risk assessment has been undertaken. The Connex depot is immediately adjacent to the fuel farm at La Collette and construction of new canteen facilities for all the drivers on rest periods at La Collette would have increased the number of occupants and, therefore, the population density at La Collette contrary to current planning guidance. The proximity of the bus depot to the fuel farm meant it was thought highly unlikely that a detailed site-specific risk assessment would identify acceptable mitigation which could be applied to the bus depot that would have reduced the risk levels, that would have been acceptable under the United Kingdom Health and Safety Executive guidelines. For this reason an alternative site was urgently required to enable the move from the Weighbridge to Liberation Station. The only feasible site identified was the south end of the former passenger facilities on the Albert Pier which was vacant and required alterations and extension to allow its use as a drivers' canteen and rest room. I was fully aware of the issues concerning the site of the canteen and the works were authorised by Transport and Technical Services officers under my delegated authority.

2.11.1 Deputy S. Power:

Is the Minister then in a position to confirm that his department and his senior officers are planning and have instigated to keep to a minimum personnel of various kinds in their employ at the La Collette site? Thank you, Sir.

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I need to emphasise a couple of aspects here. The department has not insisted on the movement of any Connex personnel from La Collette to the Albert Pier site. What has taken place is that with the creation of the new Liberation Station, facilities that were previously available to drivers on the Weighbridge - their canteen and rest room - have fallen by the wayside and effectively need to be replaced. The reason that they could not be sited down at the La Collette depot which might have been the more perhaps obvious approach, is as I have outlined; the current planning guidelines indicate that because of the potential risks identified under early risk assessment, the view is that no further personnel should be located down near the fuel farm than are currently there. Those are the prevailing guidelines that we are following.

2.11.2 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Would the Minister advise the Assembly how long he anticipates this report will take into the risk posed by the fuel farm, and would he further advise us what are the implications of the report he has had insofar as lots of members of the public are being encouraged by his department to deposit their green waste at the composting site?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

Maybe the Connétable of St. Helier did not hear what I said now twice. The situation is that no new development should be entertained under current planning guidelines. Operations that are currently in existence are effectively deemed to be allowed to continue as they are. In terms of timescale, I can advise the House that we are now into the final phase of the hazards review. I think from what I have already seen of the review, the implications are fairly clear and that is that the industrial zone that exists around the current fuel farm depot is one where new development is likely to be limited and any acceptable development is likely to be any operations that have a very low level of personnel associated with them. I think at this stage, until I have seen the final report, that is about as far as I can report to the House.