

2.5 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisssier of the Minister for Planning and Environment regarding the operation of Island Plan Policy C16 on agricultural sheds:

Would the Minister inform Members whether he is satisfied that Island Plan Policy C16 on agricultural sheds is operating appropriately to minimise the building of such sheds and, if not, does he have any plans to amend it?

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

The Island Plan policies relating to the agricultural sheds need revising. In the last few years, due to changes in the agricultural industry, the industry's requirements have changed. Today there is a demand for very large agricultural sheds in order to facilitate efficient, modern-day farming methods. Many of the agricultural sheds built in recent decades are smaller than is required by the large operators and thus we have a mismatch. Furthermore, from an agricultural perspective many small sheds are effectively redundant and thus their owners are looking for an alternative use. Indeed, many have been granted changes of use in recent years. On the other hand, the large operators need large sheds for their businesses to prosper, and indeed both large Royal Jersey exporters have recently been granted consent to build new sheds to further this very important local industry. We are exploring novel ways to deal with this mismatch and this will be fed into the Island Plan review process.

2.5.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisssier:

Two points. Would the Minister confirm that the policy of trying to get agricultural operators to utilise existing sheds has in fact collapsed? Secondly, would he confirm that the Island Plan review, particularly in regard to such sheds, has now slowed-up because of the departure of the person handling that review?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

Firstly with regard to encouraging the use of existing sheds, no, the policy has not collapsed but, as I have explained, there is a mismatch. You cannot push somebody into a 5,000 square foot shed if they want a 30,000 square foot shed. So there is a mismatch; I am working on that. I have got some novel solutions but I would rather reserve details of those for the time being. The Island Plan review has not slowed-up at all. In fact, the pace is accelerating at the moment and I am very conscious of the expectations of Members in relation to the Island Plan review process and hope to satisfy them.

2.5.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will the Minister give more information about his novel solutions?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I would be happy to give the Deputy more details privately but I do not think it would be appropriate at this moment to make those public. They have not been fully examined yet. Thank you.

2.5.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisssier:

I wonder in terms of the agricultural shed aspect of the Island Plan, could the Minister confirm that a new co-ordinator of that plan review will be in place, thus enabling that full review to continue?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I can confirm that the co-ordination of the Island Plan review is in hand. The new Chief Officer has the matter under control and I can assure Members that there will be no delay and no reduction in the quality of the output of the Island Plan review.