

2.5 Deputy S.C. Ferguson of St. Brelade of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services regarding the extension of the central reservation at Bel Royal:

Deputy S.C. Ferguson:

Would the Minister explain what consideration, if any, was given to the requirements of the emergency services before the central reservation at Bel Royal was extended, and advise whether discussions were held with those services before construction commenced?

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

It is with regret that I have to inform the Deputy and Members that during the initial design phase for the new junction layout at Bel Royal, the emergency services were not consulted as is the normal practice. However, I should emphasise that the issue of emergency service access was not overlooked and was considered in detail by the project design team on several occasions. Nevertheless, those outcomes should have been consulted directly. Subsequently, when the new road layout was under construction it became apparent that the emergency services and other motorists were voicing some concerns. As soon as the failure to consult the emergency services was discovered meetings were arranged with the fire and ambulance services to review the scheme to ensure that emergency vehicles had adequate room to pass stationary traffic. The emergency services have now confirmed that, subject to the lowering of approximately 10 metres of curbing, they are content with the new layout and are satisfied that their response times would not be reduced. The Transport and Technical Services Department is now conducting an investigation as to why such an important piece of consultation did not take place during the design phase when it is clearly included in the design teamwork schedules.

2.5.1 Deputy S.C. Ferguson:

In view of this, and the fact that the emergency services were not consulted before construction commenced, does the department not see any conflict between allowing emergency vehicles and mothers with prams to use the same central reservation? Was the previous arrangement not inherently safer?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I cannot speculate on hypothetical cases. What I can say is that the entire improvements have been consulted in terms of best safe practice and that, frankly, is the best we can do. Similarly, we have consulted with the emergency services who have agreed with what has been proposed. I wish to make it quite clear to Members that if the emergency services had offered any serious resistance to what has been put forward I would have stopped the works and ordered an immediate redesign of the project. That is not the position I find myself in.

2.5.2 The Deputy of Trinity:

Just to clarify a point, if the Minister could, when he mentioned about lowering the pavement. Is he talking about the pavement in the central reservation or is he talking about the pavement on the seaside and landside?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

The area in question is the central reservation, and the Deputy of St. Brelade, Deputy Ferguson, has quite rightfully spotted it is used, and not only by parents with buggies and prams but also by young children who want to take their bicycles out on to the front. The area has been specially strengthened to take the weight of the heaviest emergency services vehicles. The curb that will be lowered in height will be the southern section of the central reservation which will allow emergency services vehicles to mount it, drive along it and then demount it further on. I have to say in response to the Deputy of St. Brelade, Deputy Ferguson, I can see no circumstances where an emergency services vehicle is likely to collide with any member of the public. They have entirely professional drivers.

2.5.3 Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade:

Many members of the public have expressed concern about the money apparently being spent on the reorganised layout at Bel Royal. Would the Minister confirm the reasons for the changes in light of the fact that there did not seem to be a problem before?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

There have been at least 10 injury accidents at that section of Bel Royal over the last 3 years. There are issues with the inbound eastern bend with what I might describe as boy racers who have very powerful turbo charged cars, and do what is known, as I understand, putting the foot to the metal as they go past the garage, and then encounter either serious oversteer or understeer problems as they fail to negotiate the bend at speed resulting in crashes 50 to 100 yards up the road. The bend is being restructured so that type of behaviour will no longer be possible. Even those people who are irresponsible enough to travel along at speed on Victoria Avenue will at least be going in a straight line. Numerous other safety changes have taken place which include people whose home exits exit out on to that road and also we are taking account of potential danger of fuelling operations at the garage. A vast number of safety improvements have been undertaken.