

2.4 Deputy I.J. Gorst of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services regarding changes to the waste strategy and the proposed Energy from Waste plant in the light of the Juniper report:

Will the Minister be making any changes to the waste strategy and the proposed energy from waste plant in light of the recent published Juniper report?

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

I think it is a great shame that the Juniper report was not available to Members at least a year ago. The waste strategy has been in place since 2005 and regrettably this report has all the hallmarks of a last minute effort bringing professional consultants to the Island only for a matter of a few weeks expecting them to grapple with a very complex subject. Nevertheless I think that they have done the best job in the circumstances and every time I read this report I am hugely encouraged because on virtually every page it confirms the key aspects of the waste strategy, although Juniper of course do, as they were under remit to do so, provide alternative suggestions. But, for example, Juniper confirm that there was no merit in trying to extend the lifetime of the current incinerator at Bellozanne and that it was appropriate to replace it, and they also, as another example, agreed precisely with the department's view of what constitutes the definition of proven technology. I find the Juniper report, albeit I believe they could have had much more work applied to it, entirely supportive of the current waste strategy and in that light, of course, I will not be making any changes in the light of the report.

2.4.1 Deputy I.J. Gorst:

I just wondered whether the Minister was going to answer my question or he was going to continue to denigrate professional consultants. It seems the Minister will pick which professionals he chooses to...

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

That is most outrageous. On a point of order, Sir, on a point of order, I do wish the Deputy would listen, I did not denigrate the consultants.

The Bailiff:

Minister, would you please sit down. Minister, will you please sit down so the Deputy can continue his question and complete it.

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

Thank you, Sir. The Minister obviously seems to have been reading the report rather selectively. While I see that the report in large body does agree with certain elements or concur with certain elements of the waste strategy, there are other issues which it raises which I feel the Minister needs to address. It says: "And I asked the Minister whether he will be addressing these issues and whether his department will be, for example, carrying out a formal risk analysis of the consequences of wrongly predicting the quantity and nature of waste over the lifetime of the plant. Will he also ask his department to carry out a proper comparative evaluation of the options? Thirdly, will he be providing the financial case for his chosen approach?" Perhaps he could try and answer these questions, Sir.

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

First of all, I did the Deputy the courtesy of not simply saying, no, as he is sitting down. Secondly, I utterly reject his assertion that I am denigrating the consultants. Quite the contrary. I have said that these were highly professional consultants who simply were not accorded enough time by the Environment Scrutiny Panel to do a proper job of work. Thirdly, I will not go into the detail of all the various aspects that the Deputy has asked me to investigate but I can assure him that the department will provide a comprehensive response to the report.

2.4.2 Deputy C.J. Scott Warren of St. Saviour:

Does the Minister accept that as was in the Juniper report, the proposed energy from waste plant is excessively large for the needs of our population now and for the near foreseeable future? Does the Minister also accept that to have an incinerator - an energy from waste plant - that is too large will, in fact, deter our ability to increase recycling initiatives?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

This is a complex matter and the time I have available simply does not do justice to it, but in very broad terms, the cheapest way to dispose of rubbish in an Island like Jersey is mass burn incineration. The waste strategy has proposed an alternative approach which includes a very substantial amount of reuse and recycling to be developed over the next few years. I need to remind Members that the more recycling that we undertake the more expensive the whole waste disposal issue becomes. My department is working hard on deriving the most balanced and the most economic approach for the Island over the next 30 years and I am satisfied that is the conclusion that we will come to.

2.4.3 The Connétable of St. Helier:

The Minister will be aware that the presentation of the Juniper report was poorly attended, not least because it was on a Friday evening. Does the Minister think there will be merit in asking the Juniper consultants to come to the Island again to present their findings to a greater number of States Members, at which time he could possibly also describe his response to the report at the same meeting?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I am not sure that there is any particular merit in asking Juniper to come back and make the same presentation, while there may be merit for the Environment Scrutiny Panel to commission more extensive work. The fact of the matter is that the Juniper consultants refuse to commit themselves to certain specific elements such as they would not name a target percentage figure for recycling. Nevertheless they did say that the Transport and Technical Services targets were entirely sensible and understandable in the light of the very specific problems that pertain to waste disposal on an Island. I really have no view. Juniper are the consultants for the Environment Scrutiny Panel, and it is a matter for that Panel to decide whether to bring them back or not.

2.4.4 Deputy J.A. Martin:

Can the Minister inform the House and assure the House really, that the energy from waste plant that he is already planning... sorry, his department is planning, is not already too far down the line to be reconsidered and if this is the case is he not just wasting our time in saying he will look into these things? I really need a timetable on how far we are down the line with this massive energy from waste plant, Sir.

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

The Deputy raises a very fascinating question, Sir, as to who is wasting whose time. I make no further comment upon that other than to say that we are at the end of a very comprehensive tendering process that has extended over not just months, but years. A waste strategy that has been consulted time and again for at least 7 years and was confirmed by this Assembly in 2005. I am afraid we are no longer drinking in the Last Chance Saloon. The tender process has come to a conclusion. There is absolutely no chance that any new companies can be involved in that, we are reaching a conclusion. It will be then up to the States to decide on the conclusion and I can only say that Members should devote a considerable amount of their time to this issue because if they make the wrong decision the consequences for the Island could be extremely expensive indeed.

2.4.5 Deputy P.N. Troy of St. Brelade:

Can the Minister explain why he does not accept that an increase in recycling rates to perhaps 60 per cent would not result in a smaller energy from waste plant being required? There are many Members who feel that the Minister is taking the wrong course of action in the way that he is moving forward, and can he explain why he is so insistent on moving forward with a large energy from waste plant when increased recycling could drastically reduce the size of the plant required?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

First of all, Sir, I am not insistent on pursuing a large energy from waste plant, and that entire subject has been reviewed in the light of the Housing Needs Survey, information that was not available to the Juniper consultants. In respect of recycling figures that are in the realms of 50 to 60 per cent, these can only be achieved when household food waste becomes part of the waste disposal process. That can be done in a number of ways, but mostly it is either some form of composting or anaerobic digestion. Both of which require specific and relatively expensive plant to deal with that issue. Both of which produce a compost residue. Now, I have no issues with the validity of that type of process, except for one. That is that the States rejected it and I do wish that Members would stop blaming everything on me and take some responsibility of the decisions they have made earlier but have now forgotten. The issue with what you do with food waste compost is where do you put it? The States quite wisely decided they did not want to take any risk with some of the highest quality agricultural land on the planet, in case of any suggestion of pollution or otherwise. That is the current state of affairs and I am simply following States policy.

2.4.6 Deputy I.J. Gorst:

The Minister asserts that the more recycling and reuse the Island achieves the more expensive it becomes. Does he, however, not agree that increased recycling and reuse is the right thing to do, and therefore his department should be encouraging it. It was, after all, the vision of the waste strategy. Finally, Sir, he says that he has come to the end of a long tendering process; can he confirm to the Assembly, Sir, that the procurement unit has been fully involved and signed-off and agreed with all that tendering process?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

Of course the tendering process has been carried out properly. But if I was to make any further comment on that I would make this one. That is, if this Assembly, as it is entitled to do, throws out the results of that tendering process that outcome will very seriously undermine the credibility of this Island in the international tendering situation. That is a fact, and one of the facts that have dogged the Jersey tendering process was the failure by our sister island to go through with a tendering process that they held on almost exactly the same topic. We have a credibility issue at stake.