

2.7 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services regarding safety concerns at the end of Garden Lane from traffic turning from Val Plaisant into Devonshire Place at Reid's the Chemist:

After over 2 years of concerns expressed by the Constable of St. Helier, residents and users of Garden Lane and myself, what action, if any, is the Minister taking to address the potential danger and fear of injury that is being incurred by users of Garden Lane from traffic turning from Val Plaisant into Devonshire Place at Reid's, the Chemists?

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

This particular location is just one of many that have been identified as requiring further investigation and possible remedial work to improve pedestrian and vehicle safety. Some design work has been undertaken to identify a preferred solution. I can confirm that it is on Transport and Technical Service's list of works to be progressed, along with 12 other higher priority projects throughout the Island. Unfortunately, Transport and Technical Services has no revenue budget to undertake any works of this nature. In fact, I am about to sign a Ministerial decision advising all Parishes that no further work can be undertaken until a funding route is identified. However, since the road configuration in that particular location has changed, there have been no reports of any vehicle or pedestrian accidents, unlike many of the other high priority schemes on the list. As the question indicates, the danger here is perceived as opposed to actual.

2.7.1 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

I am quite surprised that there are 12 other higher priority projects identified within the Island and no doubt other Members will be aware of those issues. I am certainly concerned, as are residents and users of Garden Lane, about the safety issues, whether they are perceived or whether there have been statistics on people who have been injured or not. Statistics are basically people with the tears removed. At the moment, people using Garden Lane are in fear for their lives and the lives of their children. Is the Minister now telling us that, after having spent money on information services to test buses, that his department has no money to protect children and the users of our streets?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I have been very grateful to Deputy Le Claire and indeed the Constable of St. Helier, both of whom I know have regularly used this particular route through town, I believe on many occasions with their own young children in prams or push chairs and they are very familiar with the site. But I have to tell the Assembly that the Deputy is somewhat over-egging the case because the reality is that the only complaints that I have had, that I am aware of to date, come from both the Deputy and the Constable and, in addition to that, I have had one complaint from a resident made to me of Garden Lane. I am not of the opinion of the Deputy that residents of Garden Lane are in fact living in fear of their lives.

The Deputy Bailiff:

I am sorry, I have just been advised by the Greffier that we are not quorate so could the usher round some of the Members back? Thank you. Very well, I think we are now quorate.

2.7.2 Senator S. Syvret:

As a user of that route myself, I can say, certainly I would like him to register this as a complaint that I have on 2 occasions, nearly been hit by vehicles rapidly turning around that corner. This corner is manifestly a serious danger because Garden Lane is predominantly used by pedestrians and children and they enter out on to a corner which has high volumes of traffic turning into it. Will the Minister say that he will take the case seriously when somebody is seriously injured and killed or would he rather avoid that eventuality and take measures to calm the traffic in this area?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I think that is a particularly outrageous statement for the Senator to make. Of course neither myself nor the department are waiting for accidents to happen, although if I had £1 given to me for every time someone told me that there is an accident waiting to happen somewhere in the Island, I would be a very wealthy man. The straightforward facts of the situation, for Members who may not be aware of where this junction is, is that as Val Plaisant traffic turns right into Devonshire Place at Reid's the Chemist, there are in fact 2 pedestrian crossings with light controls that are manually operated by pedestrians. They have been installed already at considerable cost. I have visited the site with officers of the department and in company with officials from the Parish of St. Helier and we have already suggested the one clear solution, certainly in respect of vehicles exiting from Garden Lane on to the junction is quite simply that the direction of Garden Lane should be reversed so that all vehicles exiting from Garden Lane exit at the northern end. That would make a very dramatic improvement in safety. But, for some reason that is inexplicable to me, the Parish steadfastly refuse to change the direction of the road. The pedestrian situation is a slightly different matter and I will doubtless have another question to address that.

2.7.3 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

It is a shame it is the final question, Sir, because it has been going on now for over 2 years and we are trying to get this sorted out. If the traffic is reversed, it addresses the danger of vehicles exiting the street, but it does nothing to address the danger - or fear of danger - that the residents and, more importantly, the users which predominantly are made up of mothers and children - as Senator Syvret has mentioned - on their way to and from Rouge Bouillon School on a daily basis. There is a perception of fear. Would the Minister, if I supplied him with 200 signatures of fearful parents, be more willing to address the issue and identify the budget that he says he cannot identify to address this issue? Because certainly, the answers that he has given this morning are similar to the answers that he has given over the last 2 years, which do not address the issue and continue to prevaricate the issue.

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

Clearly I am not getting through to the Deputy. There are 12 other priorities that merit higher retention around the Island than this one. There are other areas where it is quite clear that accidents are happening. There are no records of any accidents happening at this junction since the road configuration was changed. In any event, I have no more money to deal with the issue whether I wish to deal with it or whether I did not wish to deal with it and that is the existing position.

2.7.4 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

Could I press on this rather than asking another question? I did ask specifically, would he identify where he needs to progress the identification of the budget? We all understand he has got no money; we all understand he has spent it all on other things other than the necessity of providing safety for our pedestrians. There are 12 other areas where people are getting hit and run over, which he also needs to address. Where is the money going to come from? Can he tell us?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I would remind the Deputy that I wasted nearly £100,000 of public funds on his investigation into composting. Sir, that is indeed the case. If the Deputy wishes to know where money goes, he is one of the people responsible for one of the more enormous outlays we have made, to tell this Assembly what we knew already, except it took us nearly 18 months to do it.