

3. Questions to Ministers Without Notice - The Minister for Transport and Technical Services

3.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Minister agree with the estimates for the cost of remediation and car parking in the North of Town development plan and is he prepared to commit car parking funding to developing the car parking aspects of the town park?

The Connétable of St. Brelade (The Minister for Transport and Technical Services):

In terms of remediation costs it is slightly early days because we do not quite know what the plan is. When it gets to that stage, we have people on board who have done this sort of work and we have a rough idea what the costs will be. But I think until Planning have decided on the way forward with consultation, of course, with the public and Members, it is difficult for us to commit. I do not know that the Car Park Trading Fund is the right source to put towards the town park. I do not think that we have identified where the car parking is going, I think this is the difficulty, and this is one of the concerns that my department has which I think is as yet unresolved. Clearly, my department are happy to move on the remediation work. I think the costs will be a significant part of the £10 million allocated. Until we have further information, I am reluctant to commit any further.

3.1.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The estimate for remediation in the North of Town development plan is between £2.6 and £3.5 million, I believe. But is the Minister not prepared to commit car parking development funding from the correct fund to the development of car parking as part of the solution to developing the North of Town plan and the town park especially?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

First of all, the figure in terms of remediation is as yet unset because it really depends if there is to be any below-ground work and as yet we do not know what that is. In terms of car park provision elsewhere, if that were to be found, yes, I think it would be right to commit funding from the Car Park Trading Fund but as yet we are unsure where that will be.

3.2 The Connétable of St. Mary:

A few months ago the Minister reassured me that he held the Jersey filter-in-turn system in high esteem; can the Minister assure me that he has taken steps to ensure that when future road junctions are planned, the possibility of filter-in-turns is taken into consideration?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Yes, I think the good Jersey system works extremely well and certainly where junctions are to be improved, perhaps they could be incorporated. I am not sure whether this would work at St. Mary at La Rue des Buttes/La Rue de la Rosière but certainly in other areas we will consider it.

3.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Can the Minister assure the House that he is perfectly satisfied with the various call-out fees that are administered by his department and, if not, what changes would he be proposing?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I am aware of the level of call-out fees which are dictated by the contractual arrangements through the unions with our staff and, unfortunately, I am not in a position to circumvent those charges. However, I am concerned when charges are put to members of the public when they are not ready for them, and it is an area which I shall be addressing with my officers.

3.3.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Would the Minister say when a call upon these services is made, what discretion is exercised? Is, for example, a member of the public advised whether or not another route might be possible, or whether indeed there is just an automatic response and then a bill is forwarded?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I think at present there is an automatic response and the bill is forwarded and this gives me rise to concern and, certainly, I think the Deputy makes a valid comment that there ought to be options offered to the public should the need arise.

3.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

Will the Minister inform the House whether he is aware of the apparent inequality that exists vis-à-vis taxis and hotel vehicles, both of which can collect passengers from the airport and drop them back to their said hotels, the inequality being that taxis need to be inspected yearly to make sure that they receive their pass as per public service vehicles and mini buses with hotels do not?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

All public service vehicles do have to be inspected. However, the Deputy I think is confusing the difference between a public rank taxi and a cab. Now, a lot of the hotel vehicles will be classified as cabs which run on a different fare structure to those of the controlled taxi cabs, which the department controls. I think that I would refer back to an earlier question and suggest that there is need for review of the taxi cab service in the Island and I fully respect the Deputy's views and potential contributions to that.

3.4.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

I thank the Minister for clarifying that there is a nuance between cabs and taxis. Is my understanding still that the point remains there does seem to be an inequality between the mini buses running, and run by the hotels, that can pick up and the level of stringency which is required for examinations ... **[Interruption]** Sorry, does Senator Le Main have something to say? As the Minister said, I would simply say that I would like to talk to him more and if he is willing to do that, I certainly would.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I thank the Deputy.

3.5 Deputy J.A. Martin:

I think the Minister halfway answered the question but I want a firm commitment. I want to know what has changed. The Car Parking Fund was committed to a car park, if it had gone ahead, at Ann Court, plus it was the first time I have ever heard of a loan being taken out because I think there is around £12 million in the Car Parking Fund and there was going to be a loan of about £12 million because the cost was around £25 million. So, does the Minister agree that if the town park should go ahead - the problem has always been the parking - can he say today that he is absolutely committed to making the Car Park Trading Fund the money for these vehicles to be parked? Thank you. **[Laughter]**

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I think I understand where the Deputy is coming from. **[Laughter]** Clearly, the Car Park Trading Fund is set up to provide replacement car parks or refurbish existing ones and that is a direction towards which this fund should be put. So, in effect, it is not for providing the town park but given that alternative parking can be provided - and this is the question at the moment; is the where - there is no reason why those funds should not be applied to that.

3.6 Deputy T.A. Vallois of St. Saviour:

Could the Minister advise what work is being carried out by his department in particular with regard to safer routes to school and traffic movement within the Parish of St. Saviour?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

No, I cannot comment off the top of my head but I am quite happy to let the Deputy know it is the department's policy to encourage more safer routes to school as part of our transport policy because clearly St. Saviour, I think, has most of the schools in the Island and there are considerable issues in the area of Mont Millais and thereabouts which need attention. I would certainly commit with my Assistant Minister, who is a Deputy for the Parish, to apply ourselves to assisting where possible in this vein.

3.6.1 Deputy T.A. Vallois:

In respect of that, could the Minister advise why the Parish of St. Saviour were not taken into consideration for the traffic movement in the sustainable transport policy that has just been brought out for consultation?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

The transport policy incorporates a safer route to schools which in turn incorporates St. Saviour. It is a fairly high-level document but the natural implication is that it includes all schools, of which St. Saviour has plenty.

3.7 Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

Something has recently been brought to my attention about taxi drivers over the age of 70: they have to, to retain their licences, cover a certain mileage throughout the year. Can the Minister please inform the House what mileage that is that they have to attain?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I do not wish to repeat my answers to previous questions, but the minimum mileage set by the department is 20,000 miles, there is no maximum, so drivers may do as much as they wish over that level. The department does make exceptions where there is valid requirement to do so. It is my view that some of the older taxi drivers, if I may call them that, do have a valuable contribution to make to the Island and having been in the business for so long, they are well received by tourists and local people alike and they, I think, provide the contribution that the department requires.

3.7.1 Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

Is this realistic in an Island 9 by 5, 40 square miles? In the current economy that we have, taxi drivers are really struggling. A lot of their fares are only short - 5 miles - how can they realistically make 20,000 miles in a year? Surely the Minister should be reviewing this.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Well, most of the taxi drivers here do so, I would suggest, and perhaps I ought to form a sub-committee with Deputy Rondel and Deputy De Sousa to discuss this because they seem to be coming from different ends of the spectrum.

The Bailiff:

Well, how appropriate, the Deputy of St. John. [Laughter]

3.8 The Deputy of St. John:

Yes, I have been there and done that. I have sat on the committee before. Could the Minister explain to Members what action he is taking to control the size of these huge tractors and machines which travel our roads and in many cases can be driven by 16 year-olds, and is his

department looking at this in earnest and, if so, will he bring some recommendations to the House?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Yes, in fact, the department have been in consultation with the Comité des Connétables on that and the Jersey Farmers' Union. We are particularly concerned over the points that the Deputy raises and will be taking action to put legislation in place that will not permit 16 year-olds to drive large tractors.

3.8.1 The Deputy of St. John:

I notice the Minister mentioned the action he was taking in relation to 16 year-olds, but also I would like to know what action he is taking to control the number of these large, very large, tractors and some of the huge machines that they tow around the Island which require, shall we say, outriders before and after the piece of machinery to stop traffic from going along certain lanes?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Yes, I think the movement of large vehicles down small lanes is cause for concern once again, and the parochial authorities have the option to control the passage of P30 vehicles on the smaller roads. I know that several Connétables do in fact do this but there is a requirement obviously to access fields, and individual cases will need consideration.

3.9 The Deputy of St. Mary:

Written question number 7: the Minister answered my question about the services provided by Fichtner Consulting Engineers as project managers of the incinerator contract and he said the total value was fixed at £1,492,000 - call it £1.5 million - and this represents, he said, less than 2 per cent of the contract value which is in line with industry standards: £1.5 million; 2 per cent. Now etched in my memory is the figure given in P.72 and P.73 last year of £6.85 million for project management costs and I would like to know from the Minister where the money between £6.85 million and £1.5 million has gone?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

No money has gone anywhere but in practice I am given to understand that the project management by Fichtner Consultants is extremely good value. In terms of a difference in figure, I am happy to answer the Deputy at a later date. I do not have the figures in front of me, so I cannot give him that answer now. The department is very content with the service provided by Fichtner and has no reason to question it but I will come back to the Deputy with any answer on the figures he puts.

3.9.1 The Deputy of St. Mary:

£1.5 million sounds quite reasonable but the fact is that States Members were given the figure of £6.85 million and that was bundled into the contract price so the question still remains, why were States Members given that figure when the true figure is around 2 per cent, which is £1.5 million? I find this quite extraordinary and would the Minister care to comment on this vast difference in fees?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I cannot be clear whether that £6.85 million to which the Deputy refers is the Fichtner figure or for all consultants. I suspect there may be other consultants involved and this is certainly something I can look into and answer the Deputy at a later date.

3.10 Deputy A.E. Jeune:

Could the Minister please advise whether the controlled taxi cabs, restricted taxi cabs, company, individual, limousine, mobility, *et cetera*, whether the drivers are in fact required to hold P.S.V. licences or whatever the modern-day equivalent to that might be? Thank you.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Yes.

The Bailiff:

Very well, I am afraid to say that brings questions to an end.