

2.15 Deputy A.E. Jeune of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services regarding steps to ensure that the abattoir resumed a weekly service to assist local pig farmers:

I guess I should declare an interest in that I do eat meat. **[Laughter]** Given the current economic climate and the need to support our livestock farmers to produce as much meat as possible for the local market, would the Minister undertake to take steps to ensure that the abattoir resumes a weekly service for killings now to assist pig farmers who have been increasing their herds and, if necessary, will he seek funding for this service from the Economic Stimulus Funding?

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

Unfortunately, the funding of a weekly service for slaughtering pigs does not meet the economic stimulus funding criteria in that a permanent solution is required and not a temporary one. However, Transport and Technical Services are currently undertaking a cross-departmental review of the abattoir in conjunction with the Economic Development and Planning and Environment Departments. The team will review the existing operation and services that are currently provided by the abattoir and look at the future strategy focusing on opening times, particularly weekly pig slaughter, operational efficiencies and a long term sustainable funding route for these services. The review will be completed by the end of July, so I would conclude by commending the female politicians of my Parish for the support they are giving pig farmers in general and particularly those in the Parish. I would also vouch for the sausages which are of an excellent taste. **[Laughter]**

2.15.1 Deputy A.E. Jeune:

Would the Minister agree that the sustainability of the farmers continuing is dependent on them being able to supply the market and particularly hotels and other businesses which promote Jersey; Jersey fresh, home-grown and all that sort of thing. But unless they can give the customer what they want, when they want it and continually, it is going to make life extremely difficult and we could end up with farmers going down.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

The whole issue is about funding and for an abattoir to run properly, it also has to have a throughput of animals when it wants them. Now, this is not always possible for the farmers to do and, in fact, in discussions last week, there are indications that there is a willingness from the farmers to be able to ensure a continuity of supply to the abattoir so that it can be made to operate economically, not only to the benefit of the public in general but also the pig farmers.

2.15.2 Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

Bearing in mind that the Minister for Economic Development just over the weekend has been in the paper encouraging people to 'buy local', will the Minister make this a priority to help the pig farmers?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I indicated in my answer earlier that the working group will report the outcomes of this work at the end of July.

2.15.3 Deputy C.H. Egré of St. Peter:

Although the Minister dealt with this question in a somewhat frivolous manner regarding sausages, will he accept this is a very serious exercise to those farmers who need the facilities of the abattoir? Secondly, we heard a little earlier from the Assistant Minister for the Economic Development Department that there were 3 solutions to this problem; an immediate, an interim and a long term. Is he aware of the immediate solution because we need an immediate solution and the end of July, to me, is not immediate?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

It is all down to cash and I think it is reasonable to discuss these matters in a sensible way with the departments involved. My department is tasked with operating the abattoir and we have insufficient funding as dictated by the regulations in place at present. The working group will be considering this and I think the end of July is a reasonable timescale in which to do this.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

I did ask the question about what was the immediate solution. Is he aware of the immediate solution offered by the Assistant Minister for the E.D.D. (Economic Development Department)?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I am not aware of an immediate solution.

2.15.4 The Deputy of St. John:

The Minister is referring to funding but given that the abattoir is there and the staffing must be there, I cannot understand why we have additional costs for slaughtering animals, *et cetera*, given that this body is in place anyway, so these people are in our permanent employment. Can he please explain what he is referring to by “funding”?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I am not sure if the Deputy was in the Chamber when I answered the question of Senator Ferguson, but I pointed out at that time that over the least 3 years, the annual cost of operating the abattoir has increased by some £140,000 and this is due to a combination of the decision to allow cattle over the age of 30 months to enter the food chain and operate to E.U. requirements. I am not sure if the Deputy was aware at that time but that is the reason for the increased costs.