

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
BY THE DEPUTY OF ST. JOHN  
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 3RD NOVEMBER 2009**

**Question**

“As AFFF (Aqueous Film Forming Foam) was used in fire fighting in the 90’s at the Airport and contaminated the water courses in the area, can members be told of the cost to date of the clean up and the connection of many households and businesses to a portable water system?”

Is water still extracted from the Jersey Water boreholes on the sand dunes below the Airport that were contaminated?

Have elements of PFOS (Perfluorooctane Sulphonate) been found in drinking water, and, if so, is this biodegradable, what is the life span and what side effects can it cause in humans?

Have any health complaints been received from residents having ingested affected water, if so how many and what is the nature of their symptoms?

Is the Department still working with the Medical Officer of Health and others to ensure that the contamination is contained, and, if so, what action has being taken?

Does the Minister consider that the settlement agreed by the former Harbours and Airport Committee was sufficient, given on-going costs, and, if so why?

When does the Minister estimate that this contamination will cease?”

**Answer**

The background to the issue of water contamination resulting from the fire fighting media used at Jersey Airport Fireground is set out in P176/2004, Jersey Airport: Fireground Remediation – Deed of Settlement, and resulted in the States decision to accept the Deed of Settlement with the manufacturer of the fire fighting foam. This identified the estimated costs of remediation at £6,445,272 both capital and revenue, which included the provision of the new Fire Training Ground.

Actual costs at the time of settlement, at the end of 2004 were £6,104,351.

From 1st January 2005 to 28th October 2009 further revenue costs of £353,062 (sampling, professional fees, connections and associated costs) and capital costs of £519,836 (Contribution to further extension of water main in St Ouen’s Bay) have been incurred i.e. a total of £872,898. Total expenditure to date is therefore £6,977,249 (£6,104,351 + £872,898).

I am aware that the Deputy of St John has been in direct contact with Jersey Water regarding the extraction of water from bore holes and has received a direct response to his query, which states that Jersey Water operates 5 borehole sources at Blanche Banques, at La Pulente end of the Bay. They are presently operating 4 of the 5 boreholes and are presently extracting 875,000 litres per day, which is 4.3% of their average daily demand. The water is transferred to Val de la Mare Reservoir through the desalination plant delivery main.

Elements of PFOS have been found in borehole water in St Ouen’s Bay and this was identified in P176/2004 and is the reason for the remediation works.

With regard to the issue of whether PFOS is biodegradable, its life span and what the side effects on humans might be, a copy of the Health & Social Services Committee comments on P176/2004 is attached for information

To date, neither Jersey Airport nor Health Protection Services have received any direct correspondence from residents or their GPs relating to any specific health concerns as a result of ingesting affected water.

The main activity to contain the contamination caused has been the major capital project to provide a new Fire Training Ground. This involved removal of contaminated shale/rock and the construction of a deep concrete wall on the eastern face to prevent groundwater running through the Fire Training Ground. This could not do anything about the plume of contamination already in, and moving through the aquifer. The actions being taken in this regard are regular sampling to monitor its progress and the encouragement of all affected and potentially affected properties to connect to the mains water supply. This by paying for connection. There are ongoing discussions with owners of properties and their legal representatives about the payment of water rates as a result. Jersey Airport has more direct dealings with Environmental Health on these issues rather than the Medical Officer of Health. It also works with Jersey Water on the issue of new water connections, Water Resources Department.

The settlement with the manufacturer of the fire fighting foam was agreed by the States and not the Harbours and Airports Committee. This decision was taken in light of the information, circumstances and legal advice at that time. I would not seek to question that decision, taken in the light of those considerations.

The advice received is that it will be decades before significant depletion will occur in some areas and this is probably the majority case. Some areas of the Bay are responding more quickly to the remedial areas than others. It is not possible to be more specific.