

4. Questions to Ministers without notice - The Minister for Transport and Technical Services

The Greffier of the States (in the Chair):

So we come to Questions without notice to Ministers and the first question period is to the Minister for Transport and Technical Services. I invite questions. The Deputy of Grouville.

4.1 The Deputy of Grouville:

Could the Minister confirm if public monies are subsidising the purchase of the double-decker buses? If so, at what cost? Which routes will they be assigned to, given their width is 8 feet instead of 7 feet 6 inches, like all other vehicles in the Island?

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

The contractor has a contractual responsibility to replace certain elements of the bus fleet and this is taking place. There will be, we hope, a number of double-decker buses and a number of additional single-decker buses and possibly refurbishment of the existing fleet. The larger double-decker buses... a bus was run on a trial period last month; I am awaiting a report on that. After that report comes and a further report comes on a longer single-decker bus, which we may trial as well, I will take a view on the replacement of the fleet, which should take place towards the end of the year. The cost is funded by Connex.

4.1.1 The Deputy of Grouville:

Could he address the issue about the width of the vehicles? Are they going to be adapted for our roads, or are they just going to run at 8 feet wide, unlike any other large vehicle?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

It is impractical or extremely costly to adapt individual vehicles to our roads and that is why any wider vehicles could only run on suitable roads. As such, the double-decker trials indicated that the routes from Liberation Station to the airport would be suitable, but regrettably it would be unsuitable on the eastern route where single-deckers would be continued to be utilised and possibly a longer existing-width version.

4.2 Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

Will the Minister support and encourage the provision of new car parking initiatives by public/private partnerships as a way of reducing his department's demands for capital funding through the usual Treasury channel?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

My transport policy will indicate that we wish to reduce commuter car parking within the parameters of that and within the parameters of maintaining shopper parking; yes, I can agree that would be the case.

4.3 Deputy J.B. Fox of St. Helier:

I wonder if the Minister would just give us an update on where we are at in relation to the subcommittee's work on speeding? Several members of the public are inquiring at this moment in time. Thank you.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

My department held a meeting with the Comité des Connétables regarding the issue over the green lanes, which was one of the points raised by the sub-committee and further discussion will be had on that. There are conflicting views on whether the speed should be changed from 15 to 20 or remain at 15, which I suspect will probably be the case. We have worked out the costs of

the changes as recommended by the sub-panel and we have already distributed some speed indicating devices to the various Parishes with success. I suspect the rest of the plans, as recommended, will be rolled out within the parameters of funding availability. But we certainly expect to get on with the ... firstly, probably the St. Clement's issue and gradually permeate through the rest of the Parishes.

4.4 Deputy S. Power:

Two linked questions related to the contracting on Victoria Avenue. The Minister will be aware of all the delays on the avenue, which have been serious lately. What is his department doing to mitigate the delays and to improve circulation of traffic? Do the contractors have to occupy so many car parks between First Tower?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I thought the subject of Victoria Avenue might come up. Indeed the phase 2 of Victoria Avenue resurfacing is now substantially complete. There is phase 3 from First Tower to West Park to be completed by 16th June, I am advised, and I am sure not only States Members but members of the public will be pleased to hear that. In terms of the infrastructure on the lay-bys, clearly there is a lot of infrastructure on phases 2 and 3 and as phase 2 completes that will disappear. The works involved on phase 2 were considerable. The works on phase 3 in terms of realignment are less, although those Members who came in this morning will note that at West Park there are considerable rebuilding works of the road which had to take place. In any engineering project there is always work to be done and changes made as the project progresses.

4.5 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Regarding Victoria Avenue, is the Minister aware that benches have been removed from the cycle track, possibly because of its repositioning? Is it his intention somehow to return these so that people can gaze upon the road works in quiet solitude? **[Laughter]**

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Yes, I am aware of the bench removals. In fact, that was not really a result of the road works per se, but as a result of cyclists crashing into them.

[11:15]

There were one or 2 quite serious injuries. So we are reviewing the positioning of the benches, although I understand the need for them. There are other benches in different areas and I think once the works are complete we shall have to decide whether they can be put back in a safe way while considering the safety of cyclists on the cycle route.

4.6 The Very Reverend R.F. Key, B.A., The Dean of Jersey:

I wondered if I can seek an assurance from the Minister with regard to the wonderful plethora of Sunday activities which we have, like the marathon and the cycle race and so on, which I am thoroughly in favour of, but can he continue, please, to instruct his officials when negotiating the details of this to have due regard to the tradition and rights, going back in one case at least 1,000 years, of worship in the town centre churches?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Yes, indeed. I was aware that there were issues regarding this earlier on and certainly in my consultations with officers at an early stage I have ensured that this does take place. I fully comprehend the needs of our broad society and understand that all elements need to be considered. I thank the Dean for his comment.

4.7 Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour:

Is the Minister of the opinion that the ability of getting from the countryside into urban areas is just as important as those in urban areas to gain access to the countryside? If not, why not?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Perhaps the Deputy could just ... I am not sure of the thrust of his question. I understand the motivation, but what is the question, please?

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

I am basically asking that there is an acknowledgement from the department that the ability of those in urban areas to gain access to the countryside is just as important as those in the countryside to gain access to the urban areas.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I presume this is to do with a bus route or such like? Could the Deputy further ...

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

I will clarify. The underlying issue is to do with the Sustainable Transport Policy and the parking provisions that arise from that.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Yes, indeed in terms of commuter ... I suggest the Deputy is alluding to commuter parking and clearly there is a need for linkages between urban areas and the countryside and *vice versa*; not only during the week but also weekends. Certainly within my transport policy we shall be taking that on board.

4.8 The Deputy of St. John:

Will the Minister confirm that a report has been written on replacing the festoon lighting along Victoria Avenue, and other lighting, all the way to St. Brelade and also the cost at £48,000?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I made a Ministerial Decision on 23rd ... well, the report was on 23rd April; the decisions made would have been afterwards, regarding the replacement of the festoon lights, which are past their sell-by date. We have decided to replace them with L.E.D. (light-emitting diode) lighting, which will involve a considerable saving to the department and of course the general public. The additional advantage of this lighting is it will light up the area better and be an improvement to not only the aesthetics, but also the cyclists who use the cycle track beneath it considerably.

4.8.1 The Deputy of St. John:

At a panel meeting, the Environment and Scrutiny Panel meeting in May, the Minister was asked about the fairy lighting or the festoon lighting on Victoria Avenue and gave us some very negative comments as to whether or not he was aware that anything was happening. Given that he had a report prior to that meeting, will he please tell Members why he failed to notify the panel that a report had been done on this lighting and a figure had been come up with of £48,000? Will he tell Members why he misled the panel, please?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I do not recall the matter arising at the panel meeting, but clearly I am always happy to communicate any issues that the department has with the Scrutiny Panel and I do not recall this taking place. But maybe the Deputy would enlighten me?

4.9 The Deputy of St. Mary:

As a fellow Member of the panel, I can assure Members that the issue did come up and at length, for about 10 minutes. My question is about the accidents per year, killed and seriously injured

on our roads, is around 32 and is looking to be worse this year. I just wonder whether the Minister would share his thoughts on that accident rate and what proposals he has to reduce it and whether we should not be moving towards zero-tolerance towards road accidents and road injuries?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I concur with the Deputy entirely in that we must move towards a zero accident rate. Clearly, any accident, especially those that involve fatalities, is extremely regrettable and needs attention. In terms of numbers, I think it is important to try and clarify the difference between road accidents that we have and those accidents that are influenced by drink-related issues. That is an area that I would certainly like to explore further. But certainly within the structure of the Island and the road layout of the Island, we are always very concerned to address issues where there may be a danger to the public; not only to the pedestrian public, but the cycling public and the motoring public.

4.9.1 The Deputy of St. Mary:

If I could ask a supplementary? Would the Minister agree that, firstly, we do not know in detail what the causes of accidents are in the Island and we should; and, secondly, that speed must be one of the contributing factors as well as alcohol?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I think our knowledge is quite good and the Minister for Home Affairs, within the police, has considerable knowledge. Of course, clearly speed is a factor and the review of speed which has taken place has addressed that with the information available and I think has made sensible recommendations.

4.10 Deputy D.J. De Sousa of St. Helier:

My question stems from the importance in our summer calendar of the Battle of Flowers and back to the Avenue. Did the department liaise at all with the Chairman and the committee of the association of the Battle of Flowers before making alterations to the layout of the parking bays on the Avenue? As I believe there are some concerns about manoeuvring and turning of floats this year in the Battle.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

It is my understanding that considerable negotiations took place with all user groups with regard to the Victoria Avenue refurbishment before the design map work took place.

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

Would the Minister agree and therefore commit to providing both the Constable and the Deputies of St. Saviour and the Education, Sport and Culture Department with a paper as to how and what the department will be doing to work with us on the ongoing traffic issues in St. Saviour, in particular school traffic, after our meeting from 9th April this year?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Indeed, that whole subject will be included in my Sustainable Transport Policy, which will come to Members before the summer recess. I look forward to being able to discuss this in depth probably in early September. The Deputy has a very valid point and we, I think, have to address with urgency the situation around the multitudinous schools in the St. Saviour area. I am conscious of the issues and I wish I could have an answer to improve the situation overnight, but it is certainly challenging.

4.12 The Deputy of St. Martin:

If we can go back to Victoria Avenue. Considerable delay has been caused by people getting to work and also going home from work. Was consideration ever given to either starting earlier and finishing earlier, therefore you only affected those people going to work, or the other way around; starting later and finishing later, therefore you only affected those people going to work? Was consideration given? If so, why do we have the present hours?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

To address the issues in 2 parts: the traffic management role is part of the contractor's responsibility in the tendering process. That is analysed by experts and it was reasoned to be the correct way to approach it. I would say that in terms of extending the hours, clearly those who live on the avenue will appreciate that the contractors do work until late at night - certainly until 2.00 a.m. on some occasions - but there has to be a balance between unreasonable disturbance and getting on with the job. I have to say, to do the job quickest we would have closed the Avenue from start to finish and a lot of the delays were caused by having to put the traffic management processes into place. I hope that answers the Deputy's question.

4.13 Deputy A.K.F. Green of St. Helier:

This will be a quick one. Given that the Minister could not remember an item that was discussed at the Scrutiny Panel, would the Minister agree that all meetings should be recorded from now on?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I think all formal meetings with the panels are recorded and I think we may have discussed initially the festoon lighting issues on Victoria Avenue, but I do not think at that stage I had received the detail from my offices, in all truth. While I supported the replacement of it, I certainly would not have had the detail at that time.