

2.13 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire of the Minister for Planning and Environment regarding the management and disposal of ash water:

In what way has the management of ash water removed from pits in the last 12 months been overseen by the department as the regulator? How is this water disposed of?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel of St. Saviour (Assistant Minister for Planning and Environment):

The disposal of rainwater from the ash cells into the foul sewer network and the sewage treatment works is regulated at the moment through trade effluent consents issued under the Drainage Law by Transport and Technical Services. The ash cells, the water contained within them and the monitoring of the surrounding area will be managed in the future through a waste management licence applied for by T.T.S. (Transport and Technical Services) and to be issued according to Waste Management (Jersey) Law 2005 by the Planning and Environment Department. Any pollution arising from the ash cell water can be investigated by the department under the Water Pollution (Jersey) Law 2000. Additionally, in the meantime, the department are able to view all trade effluent consents issued by Transport and Technical Services that discharge into the sewerage works. The department has also requested that T.T.S. test the discharge water from the sewage works for heavy metals. The department continues to monitor for the bioaccumulation of heavy metals in the marine environment.

2.13.1 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

What I have just heard the Minister say is that the ash water is being put into the drains and then put into the environment and in the future there will be a management of that under a discharge permit and tests could be done in the future, if not now, from his department. Is he now saying then, quite clearly, to States Members and the public that the discharge of ash water is going into St. Aubin's Bay? As a matter of water pollution, this is not the proper way to discharge that water.

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

The waste management licence quite clearly is designed to prevent pollution to the environment. That pollution can include the introduction directly or indirectly into the environment of any substance or energy if its introduction results in any harm to any living resource or ecosystem. It goes on to refer to any hazards to human health or food or water supplies. The key issue is whether or not its introduction is or would be the only contributing factor to that hazard, harm, damage or interference. Quite clearly, the Waste Management Licensing Law is designed to deal with pollution in the wider context. The Drainage Law at the moment is designed to ensure that any effluent that is sent to the treatment works is able to be incorporated within that process in a non-detrimental environmental fashion. Quite clearly it would be a nonsense if one could introduce things which would kill all the bacteria which do the work of the sewage treatment.

2.13.2 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Does the Assistant Minister not agree with me that the whole issue of a long-term storage of toxic incinerator ash on La Collette needs examination and that the current system is neither financially nor environmentally sustainable?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

This House will recall when we were discussing the waste management strategy that indeed a suggestion was made that the treatment of ash would be such that the practice of incorporated ash into ash pits and having the ongoing expense to deal with waste wasters that are passing through those sites would be undertaken in a different fashion. Unfortunately the Transport and Technical Services Department have decided that there are no monies to deal with the bottom ash, or indeed the fly ash, in perhaps a more sustainable environmentally friendly way.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Is that a yes?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

I think it probably is. There are better ways to deal with the ash and if this Island chose to spend its monies perhaps more wisely then indeed more benefits could flow.

2.13.3 The Deputy of St. Mary:

I just wanted to clarify from the Minister, he seemed to be suggesting that the rainwater from the ash pits - what he calls the rainwater from the ash pits - goes via the drains to Bellozanne. Can he confirm that it is tankered to Bellozanne? Can he also tell the Members of this House where the analyses of that water are that were promised, I believe, in the last sitting? Can he further tell us what the additional costs incurred at Bellozanne are when this toxic water goes through the system there?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

I do not think I am able to answer all of those. The Drainage Law regulates trade effluence can be put into the foul sewer network or indeed transported by tanker and put into the sewage treatment works at Bellozanne. It is my understanding that the waters at the moment from the ash cells are being tankered to Bellozanne. In terms of the analysis, my department have asked for this work to be undertaken. It is being undertaken and I will be happy to report to this Assembly when the results are made known. In terms of the costings, I am told and I think it was reported in a previous question by Deputy Le Claire to the Minister for Transport and Technical Services, the overall cost for the year to date, the beginning of the year to September, was of the order of £13,000. Quite clearly that would not necessarily - in fact it probably does not - include any costings for clean-up or further treatment other than what I have been given. I think that was the tankering charge only.

2.13.4 The Deputy of St. Mary:

Can the Minister confirm he has no idea of how much it costs to clean the toxic metals, or whatever is in that water, out of the system before it goes into the sea; he has no idea of how much that might cost?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

If indeed the waters are added to the sewage treatment process then there will not be a separate cost and the cost will be part and parcel of the running costs of the Bellozanne sewage plant.

2.13.5 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I apologise to the Assistant Minister if I misunderstood, but if he is saying that money is the reason why we cannot have a better system in place, are we not then just

storing-up dealing with this for future generations and does he feel that allowing money to override this is not a responsible attitude for something so important?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

I think that the difficulty with all of these things is that there is a waste management hierarchy in terms of environmental interventions, which inevitably have to be costed. While it might be my own personal preference to be at one particular end of that hierarchy or spectrum, it is indeed a democratic process to determine where the Island, as such, wishes to be. The Assembly has spoken and decided that it would wish to be where it is.

2.13.6 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

The Minister has given us a great explanation as to the hierarchy and to the laws. However, he has not reassured me one iota that his department is protecting the environment and the humans that come into contact with it. Will he please circulate to Members, when he gets it - because I know he has not been able to - his department's report on this, which will demonstrate the best practice is not in place and the environment is not safeguarded by his department through T.T.S.?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

I am certainly happy to forward the report when it lands on mine or the Minister's desk. As to the reading of the report and the working out of what is in it, I will leave that to Members once they have read it.

The Bailiff:

We come next to question 15 which the Deputy of St. John will ask of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture.