

2.5 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services regarding the pumping of water from ash pits:

Would the Minister inform Members of the number of occasions on which water has been pumped from ash pits this year and from which locations? Would he state how that water has subsequently been managed and would he give the total cost and state which part of the department's budget this has been paid from, please?

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

From the start of the year to 17th September, the department has removed water collected from 8 different ash bays on 36 days, each day including a number of individual visits. The location of these pits is within the southern portion of the La Collette site. The water is removed by a local contractor and transported to the Bellozanne sewage treatment works for disposal. This was deemed the most environmentally sound method of disposal currently available based on sampling data from the pits including analysis for metals, pH, salinity, dissolved oxygen and temperature. The cost of this activity over the period is £13,340, which includes haulage costs to deliver the liquid to the sewage treatment works. This cost has been met from the solid waste operation budget for the La Collette facility. I will conclude by saying that a proper management of our operations at La Collette is always a priority and while I am in office will continue to be so.

2.5.1 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

Thank you, that is a very comprehensive and succinct answer that we rarely hear when we put questions to Ministers. I would like to congratulate the Minister on giving me that answer and ask him for one piece of missing information. What type of water has this been? Has it been ingress from the sea or from rainwater?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Rain.

2.5.2 The Deputy of St. John:

Given the question, it raised a number of concerns wearing my environmental chairman's hat. Has this been mentioned to the Environmental Panel at any of your interviews over the last few months? We note that the Minister states it has been going on for a number of months. Does the Minister expect this to continue and is it through ingress from over the top and, if so, I was under the impression these pits were sealed?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

As long as rain continues, the problem will continue and I suspect it may. In terms of the historical process, clearly if a pit is capped-off the requirement to pump it out is not there but those pits that have remained uncapped to allow other important waste management activities to occur, such as bioremediation of third party contaminated soils and working processes, the need to pump out will continue. With regard to the Environment Scrutiny Panel, I am always happy to answer questions when they are put.

2.5.3 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Excuse my ignorance, but if rain is getting into the ash pits, does that not mean that they are not covered? If they are not covered, is there not a danger that toxic ash is being blown into the surrounding residential area and indeed into the sea of the Ramsar site?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

No, because the pits are capped-off with sand once ash is dumped on them, so there is no risk of that whatsoever.

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

In a similar vein, I was assured, when I asked previous questions, that the pits were sealed and that there was no way that the ash could come into contact either with the seawater or with rainwater. We are now told that the pits are coming into contact with rainwater. Will the Minister agree to provide a chemical analysis of the water that is being pumped out from that?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

The chemical analysis of water pumped out from various pits will obviously differ, but I have to question the Deputy's intent. Effectively, pits are capped-off once they are sealed. There are a series of ash pits, one on top of the other, so clearly there is a capping-off process. Once the process is complete, that is finished, but during the working process the pits are inevitably going to be open which will mean a risk of the ingress of rain, which is what we are pumping out, but I am happy to answer the Deputy's requirements as necessary.

2.5.5 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

Given that there are 8 different ash pits that require removal of rainwater and treatment of rainwater, what is going to happen in the future when the new incinerator starts? Will there continue to be 8 open pits that need draining?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I suspect not because the requirement for pits, once the new E.f.W. (Energy from Waste) plant comes on to line, will reduce, in that the bottom ash will be dealt with in a different way and the only requirement for ash storage will be that for fly ash, so inevitably the process will be different but that is yet to be ascertained.

Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

Can I thank for the Minister for his answers.