

## **2.7 The Deputy of St. John of the Minister for Planning and Environment regarding discounted fees to the agricultural/horticultural industry:**

Can the Assistant Minister explain whether or not the Planning Department give discounted fees to the agricultural / horticultural industry? If so, would he provide a breakdown of fees?

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

There are a number of different charging categories for planning applications depending on the nature of the work. These are set out in the Minister's scale of fees, which are published annually by way of an Order tabled in the States. As requested, I have circulated a copy of the current fees, scheduled to all Members for their information. Typically, agricultural buildings are split into 2 types, polytunnels, glasshouses and permanent buildings. Polytunnels and glasshouses, for example, are charged at £203 per 500 square metres or part thereof and permanent buildings at £306 per 500 square metres or part thereof. Applications for residential extensions are charged at a rate of £203 for an extension above 20 square metres. Applications for commercial development, such as officer, industrial or retail, are charged at a rate of £9.40 per square metre. Now the Minister has previously accepted that agricultural development should be charged at a lower rate than residential extensions and at a much lower rate than other commercial development. This is to reflect the simplicity of construction of large multispans buildings, the comparative returns from agricultural buildings and along with the general desire to support the agricultural industry. Members should be aware of 3 helpful notes in the accompany paper. Notably, under category 3, item 2, it states that the fee for proposed mixed use buildings, which include new dwellings, are calculated by adding the dwelling component, calculated under category 1, to the fee for the remainder of the floor area calculated under category 2 and 3. Secondly, under general notes it should be noted for the last 2 bullet points for very large developments the Minister may negotiate the fee charged and where it can be demonstrated that exceptional circumstances exist the Minister reserves the right to waive all or part of any fee required.

### **The Deputy Bailiff:**

It sounds very much as though it would be better suited to a written question.

### **2.7.1 The Deputy of St. John:**

Yes, possibly so. With that said, given the Assistant Minister's knowledge of his department, if I wanted a building of 500 square metres under category 3(b), what would a member of the public pay if they wanted an equivalent agricultural shed only to put their own implements in? Would that equate to 10 per cent of the fee or would that equate to 50 per cent of the fee, please?

### **Deputy R.C. Duhamel:**

As the Deputy knows, it would not be my decision, it would be the Minister's decision, but the fee structure quite clearly shows how to do the calculation. I am happy to send that information to the applicant or to the Deputy of St. John at a later stage.

### **2.7.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

Could the Assistant Minister confirm that, whether discounted or non-discounted, all applications are being dealt with within the 3 month period that applicants are given?

**Deputy R.C. Duhamel:**

I do not see how that arises out of the question, but I think the department endeavours to dispatch most of the applications within that time period that was suggested.

**2.7.3 The Deputy of St. John:**

It is a very short question time on this one. That said, given that the Minister is not prepared to answer my question that I put in previously, will he agree that there is a big differential, a very big differential between the agricultural/horticultural industry, their fees, and that of an ordinary member of the public, given that we are all spending the same amount of officers time doing this work, and what will he do about it?

**Deputy R.C. Duhamel:**

As stated earlier, probably in too long a fashion, the Minister does accede to the wishes to derive a lower fee structure for agricultural units in order to support the agricultural industry. If indeed the States as a whole would not wish that to happen then all that needs to happen is for the collective will of the House to be conveyed to the Minister for Planning, and I am sure he will make the necessary adjustments.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

Now on to question 8 which Deputy Trevor Pitman will ask of the Minister for Treasury and Resources, which is perhaps to be answered by the Assistant Minister.