

#### **4.5 Deputy R.J. Rondel of St. Helier of the Minister for Treasury and Resources regarding the implementation of restrictions by Jersey Water:**

As the shareholder representative, would the Minister advise why Jersey Water has not implemented restrictions at a far earlier stage before causing great public concern, particularly among the elderly, at the prospect of having to pay extra for water in 2012.

#### **Senator P.F.C. Ozouf (The Minister for Treasury and Resources):**

I am advised the water supply in Jersey is primarily dependent on collecting and storing the rain that falls between October and March. The weather this autumn has obviously been exceptionally dry and warm. I have also been advised that Jersey Water uses a proven water industry model, which takes account of the balance of rainfall and dry weather. The model indicates when the desalination plant should be operated by the company. They brought into use the desalination plant following normal procedures and within their normal timescales of review. The company also increased its ongoing public awareness campaign about the importance of efficient water use and provided additional guidelines on how people can help reduce the demand for water and stop waste. If the average rainfall does not occur over the coming month Jersey Water would, I am advised, implement formal restrictions on non-essential uses of water. The company's policy is not to implement restrictions on customers unless absolutely necessary. In previous years Jersey Water has not passed on any additional cost to its customers for operating the desalination plant. It has made no suggestion that this policy will change, however the uncertainty of future rainfall means the company has to reserve its position should the lack of rainfall this winter force long-term operation of the desalination plant to safeguard water supplies into 2012.

#### **4.5.1 Deputy R.J. Rondel:**

As a supplementary, would the Minister inform the Assembly when the lining of the upstream face of the dam at Val de la Mare with a waterproof membrane will be complete and whether it is scheduled to be on time and on budget of £1.6 million?

#### **Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:**

I know that this is the Deputy's first question and I would probably say that I am happy to answer all questions within departmental remit, however I do not run Jersey Water and neither does anybody in the Treasury. I was asked to visit the site but was unable to do so at Val de la Mare and I have not been informed of any delays in that project and I have a high confidence in the company's ability to deal with its capital project. But if there is an issue I will advise the Deputy accordingly.

#### **4.5.2 Connétable P.J. Rondel of St. John:**

It is a pleasure to follow the new Deputy of St. Helier No. 3, he appears to be coming from a similar background to myself. [Laughter]

#### **The Bailiff:**

What a coincidence.

#### **The Connétable of St. John:**

Given the many historical wells and boreholes which are lying idle across the Island, which did and could supply millions of litres of water to the Island, what work has been undertaken other than the Register of Wells and Boreholes to put in place a scheme to extract water from the aquifer to help supplement the water supply to the Island. I am sure the Minister would have been briefed by the chairman of the Water Board.

#### **The Bailiff:**

He may or may not because the original question was rather different. [Laughter]

**Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:**

If I may say, I am looking forward to answering all the questions from Deputy Rondel and the Constable of St. John on drains and water, *et cetera*, in the next 3 years hopefully. The Constable will well remember the debate on the Water Law of which there are strongly held views on either side of the existence of aquifers and underground water versus other people who do not believe that is the case. I cannot say that I have been specifically briefed on the issue that the Connétable raises, but I am aware that Jersey Water is making best endeavours in order to ensure that they do not have to take any drastic action in relation to conservation and we are in the lap of the higher authority in relation to hoping that the rain is falling and our dams can be replenished with supply.

**4.5.3 Deputy G.C. Baudains of St. Helier:**

In a similar vein it has been made public that the waterworks company is using the boreholes that it has in the St. Ouen's aquifer. It also has other boreholes across the Island. Was the Minister for Treasury and Resources aware of whether these boreholes are still being used and if not why not?

**Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:**

I am afraid I am not. I am happy to ask Jersey Water to put on a briefing for Members if they are interested in relation to their water conservation and use matters. I know that the company have a number of boreholes, which they do use on an ongoing basis in order to supplement their supplies and I am advised also that the particular problems this year have been because of the draining of Val de la Mare reservoir and indeed I think the foresight of previous Assemblies ensuring that we have appropriate storage facilities, including controversially Queen's Valley, ensure that we do not normally have issues. But particular issues have been arising this year.

**4.5.4 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

Would the Minister not acknowledge rather than face a drip-drip of questions, as the sole shareholder it is his responsibility to work out whether indeed the strategy of the company is a valid strategy and that means looking into the issue of the source of water and whether there is any validity in the arguments that have been put forward by people like the good Deputy of St. Clement over the years?

**Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:**

I think the Deputy raises an important matter of principle. The Treasury appoints directors, in this case it is not a 100 per cent owned entity, and we delegate the running of this company to a board of directors. I have a standard visiting and meeting schedule with all the owned entities and the partly-owned entities and the Jersey Water entity over the last 3 years has shown itself to be modernising in its approach in dealing with a number of issues. It has cut costs, it has made itself more efficient and over the next 3 years I am looking forward to developing constructive relationships with all the utilities and looking at how they can become more efficient, how they can work together and how they can look after the important issue of providing utility services to Jersey. Jersey Water will continue to get my attention, with my Assistant Minister, but I have to say I remain confident in their abilities to manage appropriate matters on behalf of this Assembly.

**4.5.5 Senator L.J. Farnham:**

I think the real concern for the general public, especially the elderly, as mentioned by Deputy Rondel in his original question is the prospect of having to pay extra for water in 2012. The Minister did allude to it in the answer to the original question. Can he say for sure that it is not the intention of Jersey Water to pass on any extra charges caused by this crisis in 2012?

**Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:**

There is, I am advised, no intention to increase water rates at the current time. I would remind the Senator that under Article 23 of the Jersey Water Law there is the ability, should the States wish to intervene on pricing, but I would not envisage that to happen, and I would also urge all Islanders to

be conservation-minded in terms of the use of water resources. I am also advised that only half of the Islanders are on meters. The remaining 50 per cent of Jersey Water consumers receive no metering of their use and are simply charged on a rate assessment basis, which is outmoded and outdated. I want to see all properties connected to meters. That is a better way to preserve stocks and I will keep under review any issues of increasing water charges, which remain extremely low compared to most other jurisdictions, I would add.

**Deputy R.J. Rondel:**

I thank the Minister for some of his answers although I am not fully satisfied and as Arnold Schwarzenegger once said: "I'll be back."

**Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:**

If he is not satisfied perhaps he will let me know what he is not satisfied with.