

2.7 Senator S.C. Ferguson of the Minister for Planning and Environment regarding the disposal of solid waste:

The 160 acres of land reclaimed in St. Helier has been economically beneficial to Jersey. Why does the new Island Plan say the preferred option for disposing of solid waste, such as building rubble, is to fill in disused quarry workings: “because the marine habitat is of higher importance and more sensitive than terrestrial habitats”?

Senator F.E. Cohen (The Minister for Planning and Environment):

Sir, the Assistant Minister with specific responsibility will respond to the question.

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

I would personally argue that both environments are equally important, but an Island Plan has to seek to balance social, economic and environmental aspects of all planning and land use options. The clause 11.91 should be read in conjunction with the question, because it is taken slightly out of context. In discussing land reclamation at La Collette (so this is not necessarily exclusively to a land reclamation site, but also perhaps to harbour facilities in the future or whatever), 11.91 states: “That, notwithstanding the above” ... which does say in 11.90 that: “there could be significant long-term strategic advantages in relocating a commercial port to the La Collette area” et cetera. It states in 11.91: “That, notwithstanding the above, there are some major disadvantages in pursuing the land reclamation option. There will be considerable expense involved in engineering a new site and some potentially serious environmental aspects or impacts including potential detrimental visual impact of landfill for many years in a sensitive coastal location, further loss of areas of ecologically-valuable marine habitat,” and it goes on to say: “which is arguably of higher importance and more sensitive than terrestrial habitats.” So there is still an argument to be made in both cases.

The Deputy Bailiff:

A crisp answer, please, Assistant Minister.

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

Yes. There are 2 more bullet points, Sir: “Less predictable impacts such as on tidal flows and sedimentation patterns around the coastline,” and, finally: “Potential incursion into a Ramsar site.” So for all those facts, it has been felt that the better way forward is to perhaps use some of the landfill sites or the disused quarry workings as they present themselves for future use and that is deemed to be an equitable balance.

2.7.1 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Yes. This is all very well and so on, but the statement was made that the marine habitat is more important. What scientific evidence has led the Department for Environment to that view? Is this perhaps not something where we should have a balanced pro and con view and, perhaps, bring it to the Assembly for debate?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

If the questioner goes on to read the policies a little more carefully than perhaps she has done she will see that, in any consideration of the use of disused quarry sites for further land reclamation purposes or landfill purpose, this will be in relation to other policies which seek to substantially minimise the overall materials that are arising in

the first place. It is instructive to be told that Transport and Technical Services, indeed, in August 2009 presented a billboard in Providence Street when clearing the Ann Court site and they indicated that 96.3 per cent of the waste rubble and other materials had been recycled and only a very small element of it had been sent to landfill. This, indeed, is part of the policies of the Island Plan and, in that respect, any future restoration of La Gigoulande or any other quarries will, in my view, be not as extensive as perhaps the questioner considers.

2.7.2 The Deputy of St. Mary:

The questioner clearly belongs to the school of thought that thinks of the environment like a disposable wipe. Is the Minister aware of the new national ecosystem assessment commissioned by and drawn up by D.E.F.R.A. (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) in the U.K. (United Kingdom) which will lead to a *White Paper* and legislation? Is the Minister aware of this document and can he confirm that such an awareness of the true economic value of the ecological systems which sustain all life will apply to decisions made by his department in this Island?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

I do not use and never have used disposable wipes and I do not consider that that behaviour should be applied to my principles on the environment. I would have expected the questioner to have known better.

The Deputy Bailiff:

The question was: are you aware of the D.E.F.R.A. forthcoming report?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

Fair enough. The short answer is yes and, in the comments that I made about the requirements for further reductions of materials that can be landfilled, I think that I have answered that point. The final thing is that, as I said, any restoration of a quarry area will not necessarily imply that we are just dumping large quantities of materials which could otherwise be valuably recycled or reused. Indeed, if we look at the quarry restorations and the sand pits in St. Ouen's Bay, and indeed the very good work of Ronez Quarries, we can see potential as to how things should be done properly.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Is there a final supplementary, Senator Ferguson?

2.7.3 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Talking to local fisherman, the existing reclaimed sites at La Collette are, in fact, better nurseries for fish than the natural reefs. Putting a statement like this into the Island Plan, which is a judgemental decision and without any evidence supporting it ... does the Assistant Minister think that an unevidenced opinion has a place in a document such as the Island Plan?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

I certainly do. But the evidence says under 11.9(1): "Further loss of areas of ecologically-valuable marine habitat, which is arguably of higher importance and more sensitive than terrestrial habitats." That is the statement made. The questioner has taken out the word "arguably" and ignored the further considerations as to the quality of the environmental impact assessment statements and, indeed, she has

ignored the things that will have to be done before permission might be obtained to restore a quarry. I do consider that, in natural systems, nature does tend to throw quite a lot into a vacuum and perhaps in the short-term period the fishing might well be better in a landfill site, or at least on the site. But that is not necessarily the only point and all of these factors will be weighed up when a potential application is brought forward, which is not at this stage.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Very well, we come to question 9 which Senator Shenton will ask of the Minister for Health and Social Services.