

8. Questions to Ministers without notice - The Minister for Transport and Technical Services

The Deputy Bailiff:

We now come to the Questions to Ministers without notice. The first question period is the Minister for Transport and Technical Services.

8.1 The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

My question follows on from that of Deputy Baudains earlier, but I want to refer to the longstanding closure of Le Mont Cambrai in St. Lawrence, closed northbound for 6 months and the work that has been undertaken on Le Mont Felard, both of which come under the Transport and Technical Services Department as highway authority. Will the Minister advise me, please, when those works are scheduled to be completed?

Deputy K.C. Lewis (The Minister for Transport and Technical Services):

Yes, indeed. I am delighted to inform the Constable that both roads will be open within 2 weeks.

8.2 Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville:

The Minister gave this Assembly an undertaking in the last sitting that he would come back and inform us when the eastern cycle track would be rectified and who would be paying for it. So far I have not received that information, if perhaps now he could inform us.

[14:45]

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

The answer is as soon as we can get engineers together to do that and the contractor who dug it up will be paying for it.

8.2.1 The Deputy of Grouville:

I am not satisfied with that answer. Two weeks ago he gave a similar non-answer and I would have expected him to have at least got the engineers and at least have a timeframe in mind. Could he give us some undertaking that he will come back to this Assembly with a timeframe? I am getting pressure from my parishioners - rightly so - as to when this cycle track is going to be rectified that was paid for by the taxpayer and dug up by the J.E.C. and has not been put right.

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

As the Deputy can imagine it has been all hands on deck with other projects at present, but I can assure the Deputy that as soon as we are able we will get that remediated. I believe my department is experimenting with different textures and different surfaces that will please bike owners and users of the cycle track, and it will be done as soon as possible at the expense of the J.E.C.

8.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will the Minister inform Members what progress has been made on the amelioration of terms and conditions, terms which he singularly failed to transfer from the previous company and in particular whether the company have belatedly recognised the Unite union as the appropriate negotiating body to discuss terms and conditions?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Déjà vu, Sir. I believe the recognition is in process by the company which is an independent company and not part of T.T.S. I believe there is recognition there if it has not already been accomplished.

8.4 Deputy J.H. Young:

Is the Minister aware of the complaints of the head Les Quennevais School and her management team as voiced at the parents' meeting on the 19th about the school bus service where buses are not turning up, turning up late and breaking down, and generally causing problems to the school? If he is aware of them, what is he going to do about it?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes, I am aware and both T.T.S. and Liberty Bus apologise for any delays involved. It is a tough call, because I think we are carrying about 800 more children than we were in the last term. It is an unknown entity at the start of the school term exactly how many school children are going to use the bus service. But it is being extended day on day and incrementally day by day it has improved. Sadly because of the works which I have mentioned previously, there is added disruption. So we do ask people to be patient and we are trying to get there as soon as possible.

8.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Could the Minister address the first half of my question: is he aware what progress has been made on the amelioration of terms and conditions of Liberty Bus?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I am not sure of the exact details, but I thought all of the remuneration problems had been settled along with split shifts and extra shifts, *et cetera*. I believe negotiations may still be ongoing.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will the Minister ascertain what actual progress has been made and report to the House?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes, indeed.

The Connétable of St. John:

Can Members not have some on this side of the Chamber? They are all that side of the Chamber and my light has been on since the beginning.

The Deputy Bailiff:

You are the fourth next.

The Connétable of St. John:

But my light was on and there are Members who have had 3 goes so far.

The Deputy Bailiff:

You are absolutely right, but you are using up valuable time.

8.6 The Deputy of St. Martin:

If I could return to the issue of the road closure at Mount Bingham and ask the Minister: he has indicated to the Assembly that the road will close for 4 weeks. But could he confirm that both work teams are in fact working extended hours and 7 days a week?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes, I can confirm that the rock team are working all hours and my team are working very closely with the J.E.C. to put on extra gangs to get the cable installed down Mount Bingham as soon as possible. This is the Normandy 3 cable. I have a sample in my hand. It is quite an extensive cable and unfortunately because there is so much works under the road on Mount Bingham it has to come down the centre of the road because there are so many services there at present. But I have requested that extra gangs be put on to get this work done absolutely as soon as possible and get one lane open to ease traffic congestion.

8.7 Deputy M. Tadier:

My question relates to kerbside recycling. When I last asked the Minister the question about a year ago he said that one of the limitations to increasing Jersey's recycling rates is the complexity of implementing 12 separate kerbside schemes. He said that they would like to pursue this but they must have the support of the Comité des Connétables. How much further are we to getting an Island-wide kerbside recycling scheme which does not rely on the current postcode lottery?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes, there are a few Parish recycling schemes going on at the moment, led by the Parish of St. John. Most Parishes have various types of recycling going on. We are in the middle of a WEEE project which is Waste Electrical being collected down at Bellozanne and other points. There is no separate initiative going on at the moment, but I believe the Constables are receptive to recycling and that is something we will pursue.

8.7.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

Since the last time I asked a question, I was told that basically the Comité des Connétables were portrayed as a hindrance to having an Island-wide kerbside collection scheme. Will the Minister confirm that he is in favour of having an Island-wide scheme which is the same no matter where you live in the Island, and if so what steps will he take to bring all the Parishes together if need be, or to institute a centralised scheme so that we can basically catch up with the 20th century when it comes to recycling all of the basic materials which should be being recycled, not simply put into landfill?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I think I would rather go to the 21st century, personally. But I would never describe the Constables as a hindrance. My department has a very good relationship with all the Constables and this is something that we are progressing.

8.8 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

On a variation on the cycling theme, I wonder if the Minister, notwithstanding some of the excellent work being done with extending the network, could he indicate why the current surface is being used when it is quite clear it is being rejected by a large number of cyclists who insist on cycling on main roads rather than on the paths?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

This is a very good question. My Assistant Minister, Deputy Le Fondré, is in charge of the cycle routes and we are experimenting, as I have mentioned previously, with various top surfaces which will give better adhesion for all cycles. We are aware a lot of the fast cycles do not like to cycle on the railway walk and on the cycle tracks because of the hogging there which they do not really appreciate. But we are experimenting with different surfaces to see if that can be remediated.

8.8.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I wonder if I can ask the Minister for Cycle Routes and his Assistant who is going I know at a fair clip in dealing with the issue, when are the surfaces going to be replaced? When is the experiment going to end and the services be replaced?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I do not know. These experiments are ongoing at the moment. It is a very tough call because even though the hogging does look aesthetically in keeping with the countryside, one of the criticisms I often get is for urbanising the countryside. So we certainly do not want tarmac down

there. But we are still working on a useful surface that will do the job adequately and look in keeping with the countryside. We will progress that as soon as possible.

8.9 Deputy S. Power of St. Brelade:

I wonder if the Minister could give an indication to the Assembly in the light of the Mount Bingham problem as to how often his department surveys the lining of the tunnel and the structure and integrity of the lining of the tunnel. Because it seems to me, given the traffic congestion caused recently, that it is now in everyone's interests to know how good that lining is.

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

As the Deputy is aware, public safety is my number one priority and I am not sure of the exact dates but I know that the tunnel is subject to regular maintenance and cleaning and checking of all surfaces.

8.10 The Connétable of St. John:

That was 5, not 4, persons ahead of me. That said, could the Members be told how many miles, feet and inches of new sewerage extensions will be put in place over the next 12 months across this Island? How many have been put in place over the last 2 years under your tenure across the Island, please, and also how many miles of road are going to be surfaced/resurfaced over the next 12 months under your tenure?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I need to get back to the Constable over exact details of that, but we are doing all we can to maintain the Island's infrastructure at present. As has been stated before, we are coming up to St. John early in 2014 to remedy all of those roads up there. But I will get back to the Constable with an exhaustive list.

8.10.1 The Connétable of St. John:

The Minister should have those numbers at his fingertips because is it not true that no feet, inches or miles or kilometres - whatever you want to call it - of new drains have been put forward into the countryside over the last 2 years?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I believe that to be correct, but we are working on maintaining what we have at present and, as the Constable is aware, we are working on upgrading the existing sewerage plants which is part of the system.

8.10.2 The Connétable of St. John:

Could the Minister not have told us that in the first place, instead of telling me he will come back to me with those numbers?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I do not have the exact details and I am sure the Constable is aware of the Phillips Street project which is part of the St. Helier Flood Alleviation Project which is quite extensive and a lot of pipe work coming under town.

8.11 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Could the Minister tell the States whether he has had any second thoughts about the location of a police station at Lime Grove House following the delays in traffic round Mount Bingham and concerns that if we had problems with the tunnel, no police could get out anywhere to the south side of the Island?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I am not the sponsoring Minister on the police station project. But my concerns, whether it is east or west of the tunnel there, would be a problem. But at the moment being east one can go through the tunnel or down past Snow Hill, Mulcaster Street and out that way. So it is slightly preferable east to west in that sense. But it is my information that the police are not there like Dixon of Dock Green waiting for the phone to ring. They are out on patrol. So if there is any incident the cars are patrolling the Island. But this is more of a question for the Minister for Home Affairs, not for myself.

8.12 The Connétable of St. Mary:

I know the Minister shares my love of filter-in-turn junctions, but I wonder if he could comment on the vast choice of junctions that exist, particularly in St. Helier, and comment particularly on junctions that during mediation works were merged and then filter-in-turn and are now filter-in-turn where the merge was and give way where the filter-in-turn was, and does he not think this is confusing for the public?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I am sure with the Constable being multilingual would understand both filter-in-turn and merge, both being the same thing. But I like to keep things simple and I like the Jersey way of filter-in-turn. It works well and long may it live.

8.12.1 The Connétable of St. Mary:

Supplementary: why was the filter-in-turn installed temporarily and has now become a give way again?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I am not sure which junction the Constable is referring to, but I will ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

Very good answer, Minister, because we have now reached the end of your 15-minute period.