WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND TECHNICAL SERVICES BY DEPUTY J.H. YOUNG OF ST. BRELADE ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 1st APRIL 2014

Question

Will the Minister inform the Assembly of the number of premises throughout the Island which are not connected to the public sewer network and rely on private drainage systems, will he also inform the Assembly of the number of such systems which are in localities where it is known there is a high risk of ground water contamination polluting drinking water supplies?

Would the Minister further provide an estimate of the capital investment which would be required to connect properties in those areas to the public sewer network and state whether he intends the proposed liquid waste strategy to make provision for the need to eliminate such risk to drinking water and whether, in consultation with the Minister for Treasury and Resources, he will be considering the option of introducing a sewerage charge as an equitable means of funding the investment required to do so at some time in the future?

Answer

The number of premises throughout the Island not connected to the public sewer network is approximately 7,000.

In requesting the number of these premises in localities where it is known there is a high risk of ground water contamination polluting drinking water supplies it is assumed that this refers to the potential for private septic tanks and soakaways to pollute private boreholes/wells or the public water supply.

This is difficult to quantify as the potential risk will depend on groundwater levels, age, condition and maintenance of the private drainage system and the proximity of boreholes/wells or public water supplies (predominantly streams) to those drainage systems. TTS manage this risk by monitoring the demand for tankers to empty these systems and liaising with Environmental Protection who are more likely to receive complaints of this nature as part of their role regulating the Water Pollution (Jersey) Law 2000. It should be pointed out that private drainage systems and private boreholes/wells have an inherent risk and it is the responsibility of the owner to limit this by correct maintenance of their private drainage systems and by installing treatment for their private water supply. The public water supply is fully treated and therefore the risk of contamination is far lower.

The Public water supply is protected through the designation of Water Pollution Safeguard Areas under the Island Plan. There are approximately 2250 premises with septic tanks or soakaways in these areas. As mentioned, the potential for pollution from these could be negligible. However, the Capital investment required to connect these 2250 premises to the public sewer network would be of the order of £70m.

The Waste Water Strategy provides a prioritised and sustainable plan for rehabilitating and improving the sewerage network over a 20 year period. In the latter half of the strategy period, the strategy proposes recommencement of the foul sewer extension programme.

At that time, prioritisation of areas to be connected will include an assessment of tanker demand and by implication, will prioritise those properties most likely to cause pollution. A property's location in relation to Water Pollution Safeguard Areas will also be a consideration and therefore, a number of the properties in Water Pollution Safeguard Areas are likely to be connected.

However, it should be noted that pollution of drinking waters can be from a number of sources, not just sewage, and preventing localised pollution of drinking waters is probably best achieved by extensions to the mains drinking water network.

Currently, there are no plans to introduce a sewerage charge to fund infrastructure improvements.

Additional Information

Whilst there are approximately 2,250 premises within Water Pollution Safeguard Areas that are not connected to the public sewer network, there are approximately 7,000 premises that are. This equates to approximately 76% of properties in those areas.