

### **3.9 Senator S.C. Ferguson of the Minister for Planning and Environment regarding efforts to deal with Japanese Knotweed:**

Following the launch by the Environment Department of the app on which to record occurrences of Japanese Knotweed and in light of the considerable effort which has been made by the public to report occurrences of it, what action is the department taking to deal with the problem of this pernicious weed, which can invalidate insurance cover for properties?

[10:30]

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

The Environment Department is continuing to develop its smartphone application and has created a G.I.S. (Geographic Information Systems) layer detailing the location of all reported occurrences. Department officers will be verifying these sites over the next months to gauge the size of the problem. Japanese Knotweed on all property under the department's administration has for several years been managed and success has been achieved in eradicating it from a number of locations in St. Ouen and St. Brelade. The department also requires developers to deal with knotweed problems on development sites when the problem is known to exist. At the moment, private landowners deal with the problem themselves. However, there are some 5 policy measures that I am considering with department officers in order to further control the problem and would be happy to outline those policy measures if I receive a supplementary question from the Senator.

#### **3.9.1 Senator S.C. Ferguson:**

There are considerable infestations around St. Brelade, at Sandybrook and on the Grande Route de St. Clement, which I pass frequently, and there has been no attempt to deal with these. Why is there not a proper publicised programme to deal with this problem and to assist extermination of it? This has been a problem for 2 or 3 years to my knowledge, and nothing appears to have been done apart from an app.

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

The 5 policy measures which I mentioned are, first and foremost, to change the public perception of the plant. At the moment, Itadori, which is the Japanese name of the plant, is an edible plant, although the public do not realise this. The spring shoots are edible and a delicacy in restaurants. It may well be something that our tourism industry wishes to take up seriously. Secondly, the leaves of the plant are used as an animal fodder and again, working with the agricultural industry, there is perhaps a free source of animal food just waiting to be harvested. Along similar lines, free food foraging is something that is on the up and up and indeed ...

#### **The Bailiff:**

The question, Minister, was what are you going to do. **[Laughter]** Rather than the edible qualities of it, it is what you are going to do about eradicating it.

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

Eat it. **[Laughter]** Eating the problem is one way to beat it. Of course, it depends on who is eating it and this is why I am outlining the process. It could be eaten by humans. It could be eaten by animals. Another bio-control measure was introduced in the U.K. in 2010 when the first licence was given to an aphid which specialises in eating the Japanese Knotweed, *Aphalara Itadori*. That is a plant control measure ...

**The Bailiff:**

I am sorry, Minister, this is far too long. Ministers must answer concisely as there are a lot of questions to be asked, so please answer the question posed concisely.

**Deputy R.C. Duhamel:**

Okay. Well, there is biological control. There is physical removal. That obviously can only be undertaken when the sites have been readily identified, which is the process that is being undertaken at the moment. There is treatment with injection with a rather noxious herbicide, Glyphosate, which is not necessarily the best environmental method to be pursued. The application of Glyphosate for knotweed eradication has been linked at the moment with increase in autism and other medical ailments, so it is not necessarily the best way forward. The final solution measure is to add this particular plant to the list of injurious weeds and, therefore, by regulation place a burden on the owner of the plants on their own site to eradicate them themselves.

**The Bailiff:**

Minister, that was an extraordinarily lengthy answer. You must please make them more concise. That is what Standing Orders say.

**3.9.2 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:**

From the Minister's reply, I get the impression that he is treating this rather in a similar manner to the ragwort problem. Can he assure us that his department is proactive in trying to exterminate this weed by physical means as opposed to perhaps putting it in his sandwiches or whatever he intends doing?

**Deputy R.C. Duhamel:**

I thought I had done that, but in order to eradicate the problem you have to know where the sites are and the extent of the problem. That work is being undertaken first and foremost before control measures of whatever type are put into place.

**3.9.3 Deputy J.H. Young:**

The Minister has told us about opportunities to eat this weed and so on and inject it with nasty poisons which will pollute our water supply. What is he going to do to provide householders and homeowners with some advice on practical measures of what they can do if they are unfortunate enough to have this weed on their property?

**Deputy R.C. Duhamel:**

The department has already done that. There are a number of department leaflets, management advisory booklets that the department have on their internet site, and Japanese Knotweed is one of them. There are several references to the householder if they do have infestations of this particular plant indicating the kind of measures that are in operation at the moment. There is support advice from Transport and Technical Services and, indeed, from the Department of the Environment.

**3.9.4 Senator S.C. Ferguson:**

The Minister says he has lots of brochures and people can read them. If he does not publicise it, what is he going to do for the property owner who finds it growing up through the floor of his house, which is what will happen?

**Deputy R.C. Duhamel:**

As I mentioned, the plant at the moment is not designated as an injurious weed, although I do agree that because of the vigour of the plant it can pose insurance problems for property holders if, indeed, these plants find themselves growing under the tarmac or under the foundations of buildings. But that really at the moment is a matter for private landowners. Should the reporting exercise report infestations on a level that would point to a change in the law to allow the States to ramp-up its control measures to eradicate the problem, then that is obviously something that I will be looking into doing. At the moment, the work is not complete and until it is we cannot go to the next measures.

**3.9.5 Senator S.C. Ferguson:**

The work has been going on for 3 years. What is the Minister going to do?

**Deputy R.C. Duhamel:**

I think I have outlined that.