

3.10 The Connétable of St. Helier of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the prospect of further strategies to encourage travel by bicycle or on foot, and to reduce road traffic being brought forward: [1(455)]

When, if at all, does the Minister plan to bring forward further strategies to encourage more Islanders to choose to travel by bicycle or on foot, together with new targets for road traffic reduction?

Deputy E.J. Noel of St. Lawrence (The Minister for Infrastructure):

We already have a States policy for sustainable transport. During my time as Minister, more has been done for walking, cycling and bus travel than ever before. Actions speak louder than words. We have delivered safe pathways to schools for St. Mary, St. Lawrence and Bel Royal. We have created pedestrian crossings at Chasse Brunet and St. Saviour and many other schemes. St. Peter's Valley path will be completed this year. Conway Street and Charing Cross have had meaningful pedestrian improvements and this summer a route from Le Hocq to Le Squez and further walking improvements around Bel Royal will be delivered. Additionally, we have introduced almost 550 e-bikes and seen record numbers of people taking our buses. What we need is action and delivery, not more strategies. I am focused on delivery of infrastructure rather than producing more paper documents to collect dust on shelves. The existing policy is not wrong, it was, however, frustrated from the start in terms of its potential meaningful impact. If Members now feel that they could support the original S.T.P. (Sustainable Transport Policy) proposals, and in that I mean the cost of using our cars to commute, we would significantly influence travel choices and support a greater move towards sustainable transport such as walking and cycling. However, any increase in, say, parking charges will have to be fair and apply to private spaces in town as well as public spaces. I do not know if the public and therefore Members are ready to accept such measures.

3.10.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

While I welcome the improvements the Minister has highlighted around the Island, it seems to me a bleak statement from a Minister responsible for transport to say that he is abandoning strategies and he is just going to concentrate on actions. We all want to see those actions but without a strategy to encourage safe and responsible cycling, does the Minister not agree that it is very confusing for people at the moment who, for example, want to cycle across the Royal Square? They may be tourists. There is no signage, there is no strategy for cycling, for commuter cycling, there are no targets to meet. How does the Minister expect to show that his term of office will, as he says, be better than ever before?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

The good Constable must have missed my original sentence when I said that we already have a States Sustainable Transport Policy. As for cyclists riding across the Royal Square, I would expect cyclists to dismount and to traverse that area accordingly. They have got a high incidence of shared use, many pedestrians use that area and it should be treated with the respect that it governs.

3.10.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Would the Minister join me in welcoming the recent Jersey in Transition *Cycling into St. Helier* report which I know he would have seen? Does he agree with the findings and recommendations, for example, which says that people who do not cycle often cite the fact that they do not want to cycle with heavy, motorised traffic, that they find heavy traffic intimidating? Does he agree with one of the recommendations that green lanes in the country which are not particularly well used by cars and motorised traffic should become true green lanes and be shut to traffic and promoted as cycle and pedestrian routes predominantly?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I have seen the Jersey in Transition latest report. It is a follow-up from the report they did earlier this year and I am pleased that they are supportive of the approach of the work undertaken by my department. Jersey in Transition also welcome the initiatives that we are carrying out for developing the western cycle route link and also the eastern cycle network. Jersey in Transition also support our harbour heads project for the English and French harbours. So, I welcome their report and I am pleased that they take the time to provide us with additional information for our department so we can take action and not just write strategies.

3.10.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

May I have a supplementary? Would the Minister also give consideration to which pavements may be able to be used as shared usage, especially when they are wide enough and they are not necessarily constantly used by pedestrians? Would this be a method which he would adopt, a method which is commonplace throughout Europe in many cities?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

The Deputy has asked previously in this Assembly about the link in Colomberie, whether or not it is suitable for allowing cyclists to cycle through it as opposed to dismount and traverse by foot, so I believe that this may be a continuation of that. We are working on a cycle strategy for St. Helier - in that I mean the town, not just the Parish - to be able to make it easier for people and safer for people to go about town and to encourage them out of their cars and on to 2 wheels which will help their health as well.

3.10.4 Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

Firstly, I would like to applaud the work that the Minister's department has done in the country Parishes with cycling; I think he has done a very good job. But when we are looking at the fact that one of our Strategic Plan aims is St. Helier, it does seem to have fallen down to the back of the queue. I also applaud the Minister for saying that there is some strategy coming but could he inform us when we are going to start seeing things due to his statement that says he expects people that come on to the Royal Square to dismount and walk across properly. But if there is no signage and you are a tourist, how would you know that that is what you are supposed to do?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

The Deputy has a point there but for every sign we put up we get as many people complaining that we should be taking them down. A recent report, a very glossy report, was produced by one of the lobbying groups. So, we are damned if we put up signs, we are damned if we take them down.

3.10.5 Deputy J.A. Martin:

Following on from St. Helier being the fourth priority in the Strategic Plan and the Minister is fed up with strategies. So where can I find the implementation plans, the budget, and what is going to happen under his department? Surely there must be a big budget sitting there because St. Helier is one of the priorities. Transport in St. Helier is one of the worst things that people living there have to deal with, so where can I find this to look at? Thank you.

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I am happy to publish the 9 cycling infrastructure projects that we have got on the go, I am happy to publish the 18 walking actions that we are planning. I am also happy to publish the 24 future works around the Island which include things like the western cycle route, Minden

Place kerb realignment, Longueville Road improvements, St. Saviour's School action plan. I have a very, very long list of actions and I am happy to share that with Members.

3.10.6 Deputy J.A. Martin:

A supplementary? Does the Minister tell me this has a budget attached to it specifically for the fourth priority which is St. Helier?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

Yes, everything that I have mentioned there, everything on my list has a budget attached to it. We were very fortunate that the Minister for Treasury and Resources allowed us not to return quite so much money from the Car Park Trading Fund to the Treasury coffers and we are investing that money in better routes - in better walking routes, in better cycling routes - and improving the infrastructure of our Island.

3.10.7 The Connétable of St. Helier:

The Minister did not answer Deputy Wickenden's question which was: when will this cycling strategy be published? It is music to my ears because I remember sending to then Deputy Guy de Faye a cycling strategy, having despaired as a Parish of ever seeing one; that is a few years ago. I would like to know the date when the cycling strategy will be produced. I would also like to know when a walking strategy will be produced because this scatter-gun approach of doing bits all over the place really needs, as the Minister said himself, to be tied-up with routes. When are we going to be told what the major walking routes are into St. Helier for commuters and school children and visitors and how the Minister is going to make them more walkable and encourage people to leave their cars at home that are able to and therefore reduce the congestion which has a great toll for the whole economy and our health? Thank you.

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I am afraid the Constable must not have been present in mind when he was present in body with the Future St. Helier Group. A lot of this work has already been presented to the Future St. Helier Group which the Constable is part of the 3-man team, the Minister for Environment being the other politician involved. The detail of those works will be progressed and they will be produced prior to mark the end of my term of office.