

#### **4.4 Deputy G.W.J. de Faye (The Minister for Transport and Technical Services):**

Members will recall that the previous Environment and Public Services Committee lodged its Strategic Travel and Transport Plan (P.174/2005) on 30th August 2005 with the aim of debating it prior to the end of that session of the States. In the event, the States agreed to defer consideration of this report and proposition until the new session of government because more urgent items required States' time. At its meeting on 26th January 2006, the Council of Ministers considered the Strategic Travel and Transport Plan and approved it as a high level framework document on which to develop some specific and detailed proposals for a number of key areas, namely buses, including provision of bus shelters, taxis and car parking. I have been charged with bringing these plans back to the Council of Ministers within 3 months and look forward to working in partnership with Scrutiny to achieve this target. For those reasons, I have withdrawn P.174/2005, which was currently scheduled for debate on 14th March 2006. Whilst I am on my feet, I would like to take the opportunity to correct some erroneous and speculative comment I overheard in the media this morning indicating that this withdrawal constituted some form of rejection by the Council of Ministers. I mention no names but Members may care to follow my eyes. [Laughter] On the contrary, the Travel and Transport draft framework document has been warmly endorsed by the Council of Ministers and work on the strategy has been effectively fast-tracked so it can be consulted, debated and implemented as soon as possible.

#### **The Deputy Bailiff:**

Deputy, have you sought approval for the lodging of this statement?

#### **Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:**

It is a point of information, Sir. [Laughter]

#### **The Deputy Bailiff:**

Why do you not wait until you are asked a question and then see if you can bring it in?

#### **Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:**

I thought this might save a few questions, Sir.

#### **The Deputy Bailiff:**

I think we will ask the Constable of St. Helier.

#### **4.4.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:**

While I support the Minister's desire to improve the efficient working of his car parks by putting in barriers and removing scratch guards, and freeing up his staff to be on the streets, I am quite honestly astounded by this statement. We have a policy that was lodged in the States last year; involved a lot of public consultation - we are led to believe - has had amendments brought to it with them down for debate in March; and has now been approved, we are told, by the Council of Ministers. I am flabbergasted. Is this the shape of things to come? It seems to me...

#### **The Deputy Bailiff:**

What is your question?

#### **The Connétable of St. Helier:**

Would the Deputy confirm to me that it is precisely the high-level policies that should be coming to this House? We are quite happy for him to do the nuts and bolts as a Minister but should he not be bringing this policy for a debate in the States?

#### **Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:**

The Connétable of St. Helier raises a number of intriguing points. Yes, I believe this probably is the shape of things to come. Executive government will conduct government in a much more efficient, direct and positive way. I am delighted to hear support from the Connétable. I merely regret that it was the will of the States not to accord the Strategic Travel and Transport Plan sufficient priority to be debated last year. I am sorry that as a result of that a different course of events has occurred.

**4.4.2 Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville:**

I am a member of Operation Mistral with the Police Chief and other people. Will the Minister confirm he will take on board the findings of that working group looking at the evening economy with regard to taxis, the bus service, closing times and a whole raft of issues, before he actually finalises the document?

**Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:**

We now look forward to a 3-month consultative period with Scrutiny, members of the public, taxi operators and drivers, bus groups and anyone else who would care to contribute. There is no question that the findings that have been delivered under what I understood to be called Operation Mistral - which relates to how essentially the Isle of Man deals with its late-night revellers - will be accorded consideration and attention.

**4.4.3 Deputy C.J. Scott Warren:**

Can the Minister assure Members that “detailed proposals for a number of key areas” will include developing further the safer routes to schools initiative as a top priority within the 5 years as was in the original plan?

**Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:**

Yes, it certainly will include safer routes to school. However, I cannot say for certain that it will be a - or the - top priority. It is certainly one of the priorities that are under consideration.

**4.4.4 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisser:**

Can the Minister confirm whether he has been mandated by the Council to go out and have a series of pleasant chats with people and to throw some quite bizarre but interesting and stimulating ideas into the pond to see what happens? Or can he give us details, Sir, of what precisely they have approved about this plan?

**Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:**

I have effectively been given that mandate, yes. I hope people will feel free to make their contribution to the forthcoming consultation process. But I am at a loss to understand Members’ indignation. They have been in possession of the Strategic Travel and Transport framework document since August last year and I am surprised that so many of them seem to have forgotten what it contains.

#### **4.4.5 Senator F.H. Walker:**

Will the Minister share my bewilderment at the line one or 2 of these questions are taking and confirm the point that the Council of Ministers endorse the original strategy as a high-level framework document, as his statement says, on which to develop some specific and detailed proposals for a number of key areas? In other words, it is an overall way forward, which we want in the best interests of good government to see elaborated on very considerably and produced in a substantial form which will give the House every opportunity to know exactly what it has in front of it and approve a full, co-ordinated and detailed transport plan. That is what we have done here. That is all we have done and I am astonished at the line the Constable of St. Helier has taken and one or 2 other questions as well. I hope he shares my astonishment. Does he share my astonishment? [Laughter]

#### **Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:**

I do share the astonishment of the Chief Minister and I thank him for his lengthy and very perceptive question. [Laughter] I think Members should reflect for a while that times have changed and while it may have been appropriate under our former system of government to seek the sort of direction that the Strategic Travel and Transport Plan was looking for as a high-level draft framework document, it is now quite clear that under our new Executive government we can simply get on with things and drill down to the details of strategy and then present a strategy ultimately via the Council of Ministers to the States for their consideration in due course.

#### **4.4.6 Deputy J.B. Fox:**

Would the Minister give assurances that he will meet the 10 Deputies of St. Helier and resident Senators or any other Senators representing the Parish? I have been trying for months now to discuss personal safety for late evening with the ministerial group. Twice I have been to the Home Affairs Committee and I am still waiting. I have given up and, therefore, I ask if I can deal directly with the Minister and with the fellow Deputies on this very important subject before it comes anywhere near the States.

#### **Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:**

I can understand why the Deputy has struggled to have meetings on the ministerial group because there is no such group. [Laughter] However, in respect of Operation Mistral [Laughter] - which unfortunately does reflect a lot of hot air I am sad to say - I am happy to conduct a meeting with the Deputy and as many number of his friends as he cares to invite along.

#### **4.4.7 Senator J.L. Perchard:**

Talking of hot air, will the Minister tell us about his Travel and Transport Strategy and compare it with the Travel and Transport Policy that he will be bringing to the States shortly? Does he realise there is a subtle difference between a strategy and a policy? Will he confirm that, in fact, it is a detailed policy that will be being presented to the States in 3 months' time?

#### **Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:**

I welcome that question from the worthy Senator. As I recall, we only recently had a personal discussion on the merits and differences between strategies and policies. I can confirm that there is a difference between a draft high-framework document which is, as I alluded to previously, a broad-brush approach of general policy directions; and a full strategy which shows how those broad policies are actually drilled down to detailed outcomes. In other words, if we look at, say, the operation of taxis and cabs within the Island, a broad policy approach is, for example, to say that those general services should be more customer-focused. Now, when you actually drill down to what is it that makes taxis and cabs more customer-focused, of course you get more detailed results. That is what we intend to produce.

**4.4.8 Senator J.L. Perchard:**

What can the States expect in 3 months' time, a strategy or a detailed policy, Sir?

**Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:**

The States can expect a strategy containing a number of detailed policies, of which I am sure [Laughter] the States will be very proud when they warmly embrace it and pass it.

**4.4.9 Deputy C.J. Scott Warren:**

Would the Minister here verbally endorse meetings at Parish Halls throughout the Island organised by the Bus Users' Forum to discuss the needs of people in the Parishes regarding future bus travel at all times of day and evening?

**Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:**

I am very happy to entertain forums of any enthusiastic kind in respect of transport and travel. I am not currently aware as to whether the Bus Users' Forum as a body is currently functional or defunct, but if they are a functional group I will be only too delighted to listen to what they have to say.

**4.4.10 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains of St. Clement:**

I always thought a framework was just that, Sir, no cladding and nothing inside it. I fear that the transport framework is little different. Can the Minister assure us, Sir, given the vast amount of work required to turn it into something tangible, that it will, in fact, be done in the timeframe?

**Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:**

I do believe I am wearing some clothes as this is not a case of the emperor with no clothes. The framework may appear slightly bare to the Deputy, but I can assure him that both myself and the officers within my department have been working very steadily on what may turn out to be the content of the strategy for the past many months. I am very confident that we can fulfil the timescale laid out.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

Very well. Standing Orders permit 10 minutes of questioning and that has now expired