



STATES OF JERSEY
Environment, Housing and Technical Services
Scrutiny Panel
THURSDAY, 5th FEBRUARY 2015

Panel:

Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier (Chairman)
Deputy D. Johnson of St. Mary (Vice-Chairman)
Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier
Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade

Witnesses:

Deputy S.G. Luce (The Minister for Planning and Environment)
Mr. A. Scate (Chief Executive Officer)
Mr. W. Peggie (Deputy Chief Officer, Department of the Environment)
Dr. L. Magris (Director for Environmental Policy)

Topics Discussed:

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[10:29]

Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier (Chairman):

Welcome to the Environment, Housing and Technical Services Scrutiny Panel public hearing with the Minister for Planning and Environment, the Deputy of St. Martin.

[10:30]

This is being recorded and it is a public meeting. We are very grateful to you for making the trip down from South Hill in this cold weather. We have got a variety of questions for the Minister, which we hope you will be able to answer.

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

I will do my very best.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I know you have got your team here for advice if you need them. Perhaps I could kick off by asking you about your understanding of environmental sustainability for Jersey. By way of introduction, the last two Strategic Plans that the Council of Ministers have brought forward, certainly the last Strategic Plan, if not the last two, have used the word “sustainability” in a slightly free sense, and I had to myself amend the Strategic Plan to introduce the word “environmental” to go with the word “sustainability” because clearly without it, sustainability could refer to the ability to pay the bills in terms of economic sustainability, in other words. It is a key concern for this committee that your Department knows what environmental sustainability is and is going to really take strides in the next three years to produce the kind of results that we would hope for around that. Perhaps could I ask you to start by talking about environmental sustainability and what you think the challenges are for Jersey?

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

Thank you, Constable, Chairman. That is a massive subject and obviously environmental sustainability covers a really, really large range of various topics. Environmental sustainability is something that I am sure the Department would be very keen to persevere with as much as we possibly can. I think we might say from the outset that when pressures come on finances that maybe the environment is pushed even further to the background, as is done quite often, a little bit like buying organic vegetables in the supermarket when money is plentiful and people feel they have additional spend available to them, they will quite happily pay a little bit more to buy the environmentally-friendly organic vegetables, but as soon as the money gets tough and there is less pence in your pocket, it is usually those sort of things that suffer first. I do not think there is any doubt that my Department exists on quite a small budget compared to others. We do an awful

lot for the Island. Every Islander is affected by both planning and environment and the policies we pursue, but we do that with a very limited amount of funding, which in itself then creates its own problems because we then have to prioritise where we put the policy work. As regards to specific sustainability, obviously we have got a new energy policy which came out last year. It went through the Assembly very successfully, and certainly when I was in your position last year, the Panel were very keen that that energy policy came to the Assembly, because we thought it was very important for the whole House to sign up and to understand fully what we were committing to. The key measures in that policy involve things like the Kyoto Agreement, making sure we reduce our carbon emissions, and that is done mainly in two ways. One stream of that work is transport, where we have to do everything we can to reduce emissions from vehicles, and that means looking at electric vehicles or other alternative sources of energy, low emissions obviously being the key word there. The other one is housing, where the population of the Island spends still a massive amount of money on heating their homes, and through various schemes and initiatives in the department, we are keen to make sure that that amount of spend is reduced as much as we can, and we are doing that through enhanced by-laws and making new rules and regulations so that new houses that are built are insulated to the nth degree, and we look forward to days not very far into the future where we will have almost carbon-neutral homes for people to live in.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Chairman, can I just ask a point of detail? Sorry to stop you in the flow, but I think it is important just to get that back and forth. In terms of the Kyoto Agreement and transport, of vehicles and their emissions in Jersey, do you accept that there is a tension in the Council of Ministers' policies on the one hand where we have just spoken about tourism this week, we want to get more tourists to Jersey? That will involve of course - in an ideal world, if it is successful - having more planes coming to Jersey in and out, and these planes obviously give vastly more amounts in terms of emissions than local traffic would. If push comes to shove, and in order to be able to support tourism, support farming as well and the dairy industry, which we spoke about this week, we have to increase Jersey's emissions, where do your priorities lie when it comes to tourism and the environment?

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

Obviously there is a massive pressure on the Department to maintain our green and pleasant countryside and our wonderful coastline, because those are the over-arching reasons why tourists visit our Island, and I think we must do everything we possibly can to maintain the beauty of our Island for that reason. We all know - and I will not go into detail - as to how important the tourist industry is to us and how many other Islanders benefit from the tourist industry being here. But your particular point about planes and boats is well-made, but I am not sure that we are in a position in Jersey to dictate the transport methods that those tourists might come to Jersey via. I might say in their defence the main way of getting people on and off the Island is on boats.

Condor Ferries have recently signed a long-term agreement with the States for a certain amount of exclusivity. Both their large vessels have recently had to comply with new regulations to make their engines more friendly from an environmental point of view and they have done that. They have increased freight charges ever so slightly to compensate the money they have had to spend on the type of fuel they are now allowed or not allowed to burn on those boats. Of course, as we all know, Condor have also recently invested in a brand-new boat which comes online next month, and that replaces two fast ferries which have historically been hugely hungry for diesel oil and have consumed a massive amount. I cannot think that anybody will not be pleased to see that not only is this new boat going to be more comfortable, it is going to burn considerably less fuel carrying similar amounts of passengers. I know that obviously from a shareholder point of view Condor are keen to reduce the amount of fuel they spend, but from an environmental point of view, that will be a considerable benefit.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I suppose the question is if in the short term or medium term we needed to increase our carbon emissions in order to benefit from a more vibrant tourism industry, agricultural industry in order to get economic growth back up to what it has been in the past, is that a price that is worth paying in the short term?

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

I am not sure that there is an alternative. We could potentially look at whichever mode of transport produces the least amount of carbon and say: "We will positively encourage people to go on that mode of transport."

The Connétable of St. Helier:

We will have to have big sailing clippers coming back to the Island, I can see. Can I go back to the more general issue that we started with, which is around the definition of environmental sustainability, and feel free to ask Will or Louise here, but we are doing a review of environmental policies and it seems important to me that the Council of Ministers understands what do we mean by environmental sustainability.

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

The first thing I would say is that the Island cannot survive without energy and that main source of energy is electricity and its various different ways of producing that electricity. The Department is certainly very keen - and it comes out in the energy report which we agreed last year - that we want to look at some more sustainable ways of producing that energy. Certainly there is a number of options. We know that Jersey Electricity are very keen in the short term to look at wind power. There is a move that maybe we might have a couple of small turbines on-Island, maybe at La Collette, but I do not think it is a secret that the French are putting a very large windfarm to the

south-west of the Minquiers which will come right up to our immediate line and the outer extremities of our territorial water. I think it is also no secret that we are quite keen to talk to them about how that might be expanded into our own waters. There are some issues around the ownership of the seabed that need to be resolved and I think that there will be a discussion that is to be had there. The difficulties of course of wind power is that if the wind does not blow, the energy is not produced, and certainly we are well aware of the difficulties - if I can use that word - of our own energy from waste plant, which produces good energy and we are really pleased to have it, but it is not consistent. The difficulty that we have is that if the energy from waste plant produces seven or eight on one day and four or five the next, Jersey Electricity have to make up that difference. Quite often that could be done in an emergency with fuel oil and what we need is to try to investigate the most consistent type of sustainable energy that we can find.

Deputy Chief Officer, Department of the Environment:

Do you want me to just add to that? I do not know whether you are trying to push it in this direction, but I think what the Minister is doing is outlining some very practical examples of policy direction that this Department needs to take. We alluded in a conversation earlier on last week as to the long-term nature of the work that is undertaken by the Department. Going back to the Local Agenda 21 definition of sustainable development, you are looking at not just benefiting the future generations by deleterious actions today, and I think that is pretty much what is signed up to in every area of policy development the Department takes. I think energy particularly is something obviously that our department has been working very, very hard on I think for the last seven - and I am looking at Louise...

Director for Environmental Policy:

Yes.

Deputy Chief Officer, Department of the Environment:

...years to try to get through the States, hopefully very successfully last year, and we are now pushing forward with bit upon bit upon bit of that. In terms of the definition, we are very, very clear as a Department what that requires in terms of onward policy development and what we should be encapsulating within the practicalities of that development. It will be brought forward at every opportunity within the larger policy development area.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Thank you. The Minister said that there is pressure on finances and that the environment can be pushed into the background. Do you think that environmental sustainability need be more expensive? You gave the example of organic vegetables, which clearly is more.

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

I am happy to talk further about food and that was why I was going to...

The Connétable of St. Helier:

It was not so much more about the vegetables, it was do you think the pursuit of environmental sustainability for Jersey should be more expensive than if we carry on as if we do not have to worry about future generations? I mean...

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

I think there is always going to be a cost to doing that. The example I would use is the food analogy. I take it wider than just organics: certainly we know that the most cost-effective way to produce food is to do it in vast amounts, whether that is in Lincolnshire, whether it is in the U.K. (United Kingdom), whether it is in Europe, Eastern Europe, whether it is in America. Economies of scale are massively important when it comes to the cost that the end-user pays and I think we have to accept in Jersey that we have wonderful farmers who can grow just about anything. The difficulty they have had in the past - and the pressures increase only year on year and continue to increase - is that they cannot find crops that they can grow profitably, and that is the difficulty. We know in Jersey we can grow just about anything you want. What we cannot do is grow it to a point where people buy it because the cost is prohibitive, and 20 or 30 years ago, the cost of potatoes, main crop potatoes in Jersey, was always known as: "It is the cost of those potatoes in Portsmouth, plus the freight cost per tonne" and that was the maxim in those days and these days it does not really change. We would very much like to be far more sustainable, self-sustainable in Jersey in our food production. The difficulty we have is that when you have to compete against the vegetable farmers who supply the major multiples in the U.K. and those prices reflect in the Jersey supermarkets and it is really, really difficult for local farmers to compete. Another case I would cite which backs that up, our largest local producer of goods, vegetables, is Amal-Grow - and it has been for a number of years now - recently taken over by one of the large U.K. firms, who have announced very recently they will be reducing the amount of food they grow locally by around 20 per cent, with the consequent loss of labour and so on, mainly because they cannot make any money out of it. When your largest local producer starts saying that he cannot make enough profit, you realise that your small local producer is going to struggle even further, because he does not have the economies of scale.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

You have got a lot of background in farming. I know more about transport. It is interesting that people think to have an environmentally sustainable attitude to transport is going to be more expensive than not, but clearly there are massive savings to be made by a family who decides to reduce their dependency on the motorcar, for example.

Chief Executive Officer:

If I could add one sentence to, I guess, our thought process. I would just summarise that by wise use of resources in all areas. We very much deal the physical resources: the Island, the sea, its land, its water, its energy, that sort of thing.

[10:45]

It certainly runs through, but it runs through financial planning, it runs through transport, it runs through a number of behaviours. I guess a lot of our strategies, a lot of our direction in the Department is around making sure the question is asked: "Is that the wisest use of resource? Can you do it more efficiently?" A lot of our work, certainly on the energy front, especially is about making sure that what we have goes further, reduce, manage and invest type mindset, whereby you reduce your need to take a resource, you manage then more effectively what you have and then it saves you a lot of money on the investment side. I guess for me it is about that wise use I would add into any sort of definition, which I guess it could be an on the side of the milk bottle definition. What I think sustainability is, it is about that mindset, it is about an understanding of the impact that you are having and thinking about how you mitigate those impacts.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Educating the public?

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

You mentioned these fine water bottles when you came in. I have not heard Eco-Active used much by the Department recently. Is that something you are still...

Director for Environmental Policy:

Yes, very much so. I am sorry to hear that you have not, but we are still very active. I think the work that we are doing at the moment is very focused on assisting the business community. We know we have an Eco-Active business scheme which runs in parallel with the Eco-Active States scheme, which is about getting the States of Jersey Departments up to levels of environmental accreditation and improvement. We have been working very hard within the States over the last few years, and I am looking around to see if you have got any "Turn it off" stickers but you do not, so let us move on. But we have been doing a lot. I am sure you will be familiar back in Departments, you will see lots of campaigns that are going on about waste and water and all of those things. We have been very much focused on the States of Jersey as an organisation in taking a lead, but also in parallel with that, working with private businesses to ensure that they

have the campaign material and the information to identify and improve their environmental performance to get them up to the same standard as well. That is quite a one-on-one process, in that we will work with specific businesses and help them through that process and then they are free to go off into the world and carry on implementing their plans, they need less direct help from us and we can move on to help others. That is a key focus for us, to reach our energy reduction targets, but of course Eco-Active is not just about energy, it is about water use, as you rightly identified, procurement, biodiversity, there is other transport, there is other issues too. But I just wondered if you would not mind if I just pick up your question, Constable. You asked, I think, a very good question about whether sustainability costs more, and I think the way I would tackle that is to say it all depends how you calculate it. What people tend to do is they will look at a calculation around costs in the very short term and I think we know that the environmental costs are always calculated over the long term. A good example I would give is around building a new house. If a developer is building a house, if they were to insulate to the absolute highest possible standards, EcoHomes, B.R.E.E.A.M. (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology), whatever it might be, there might be a small increase in capital costs. You are frontloading that investment. The reality is over the lifetime analysis of that home, it is going to cost the occupier a whole load less to run. It will use less energy, it will be more comfortable to live, you will have avoided issues of perhaps poor health in an unpleasant environment long, long, long into the future. There is no doubt when you account over the lifecycle of many sustainability decisions, they pay back. There is no doubt about it.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

If all your staff at South Hill were to walk or cycle to work, in 25 years you would have a much better staff and the health costs would be a lot less, so that is another example.

Director for Environmental Policy:

Exactly, yes.

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes, I think that is the difficulty as a government department, governments have in terms of investing in proactive services which pay back over the longer term versus today the reactive services which we all need instantly in terms of criminal justice and health and education and those sort of things. Education is obviously longer term; it has two roles. I think that is the struggle we have with some of our strategy work. Obviously to prove that it works, it takes generations.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

But have you got enough resources to continue or even to grow the Eco-Active programme? Is your budget sufficient to do that?

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

Our budget is going to be under severe pressure. I do not even mind using that word: there is no question that as a States Assembly, we have identified priorities with the Council of Ministers, and while the future St. Helier project is one of the four strategic...and it is very nice and we can go back to the health benefits of what we are hoping to work with you on in St. Helier, and they are many and they are long term. I think there is no doubt that we all know that health is the number one priority and education and the economy come second and third, but we know that health is a vast consumer of finance. There is no doubt when you look at the States ministries and you work your way down the list in order of priority, and it will not be a surprise to us on this side of the table certainly to find that planning and environment come - unfortunately for us - a lot further down the list than we would like.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

But should environment not be at the top of the list?

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

It could well be. The problem is if you want to put environment at the top of the list and you start saying to the Minister for Health and the people of the Island that they are going to prioritise the environment over health, they quite understandably become pretty agitated.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

It would not take all their money. I am going to ask the Vice-Chairman, who wants to question you a bit more about resources, because you started off by saying that there was pressure on your finances, the danger that environment would be put into the background. It is clearly not the top of the Strategic Plan, indeed it is not one of the four main items, so David is going to ask you a few questions about resources because we are concerned about that.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Yes, thank you. You have already made the introduction for me, in fact. Obviously resources are a major concern of the Panel. To begin with, what growth bids do you anticipate having to make for the new Medium Term Financial Plan?

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

I think I will ask my Chief Officer. It could be quite a short answer.

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes, it is. In context, our budget over the last eight, nine years is exactly the same in net terms, so we generally run with a £10 million gross budget, net budget issue is £5.9 million, because obviously there is a fair tranche of income coming in from the services which have got fees

associated with them, planning and building fees predominantly. But our budget today is £5.9 million, our budget in 2008 was £5.9 million, and I think there is a context there, just to put it into perspective, that in real terms our funding has not changed.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

It has gone down then, has it not?

Chief Executive Officer:

In real terms, when you build inflation in, our core costs have come down about 30 per cent in that 8-year period. To keep it the same, we have in effect absorbed inflation and we have also absorbed the £1 million additional on the energy efficiency grants that were added to the budget in 2009, so it is an interesting graph. But environmental spend, you could say it is very consistent, but in real terms it has gone down as a portion of other Government spending. In terms of growth bids, we do lodge growth bids, because increasingly there is more and more environment work to do. The environmental agenda is growing. It has not shrunk in the last eight years, and if we go back to previous documents - and you have referred to one document in the letter, the 1998 document - many of those issues have not gone away, if not, they have magnified. We therefore...

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can you give us an example of some of those issues?

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes. If we go back to 1998, for instance, the...

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

Sorry to interrupt. If I could just go back even further, before Andy starts on 1998, just when I first started in the countryside, we had a Department which was badged agriculture and fisheries, and I think it is important to stress in those days the agricultural bit focused purely on the farmers, helping farmers, grant aiding farmers, doing whatever, and the fisheries bit did what it says on the tin, it helped fishermen. The agricultural side has developed into the environment and, in fact, the change of words means that we are now focusing much more generally on the whole environment and we are looking at water, we are looking at the fields. It is not just focused on farmers and it has developed into a much broader brief. Similarly, the fisheries part is now badged marine resources, and that is specifically done for a reason as well, because there is far more to what happens in the sea than fishing. There is all sorts of arable working and then you have got the seabed. The point I just want to make, very briefly, is that back in the 1970s and 1980s, it was agriculture and fisheries, and now it is environment and it is marine resources. What has happened is as we have done this, we did not focus very much on the environment 30 years ago.

Every year that goes by, I think we are focusing more and more on the environment and less and less on the farming.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Less money.

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

With less money, and that will take us on to 1998.

Chief Executive Officer:

In terms of growth bids, I will just give you an example of some we have lodged previously which have not found a high enough priority to get funded, so the Coastal National Park that we have is a very good example of that. We have identified it as a policy framework within the Island Plan, so it is very base level. It is planning policy that seeks to restrict and protect our coastal areas. If we want to encourage greater biodiversity action within that greater access, holistic land management with that area, we will need to spend money on it. We need to get people into it, we need to improve the footpaths, we need to improve the habitat of that area, we need to improve branding, signage, those sort of things. We have an idea of what that would cost, but it does not ever trip high enough on the priority list to get funded, so that was one example of a bid we put through the last M.T.F.P. (Medium Term Financial Plan).

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Yes. I do not think there is any question of the Panel not appreciating that your demand...sorry.

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes, in the forthcoming M.T.F.P., literally the only thing that is listed for the Environment Department as a whole is the planning appeal system, which potentially may incur ironically not this Department's costs, but it will incur probably more administrative cost within the Judicial Greffe, which is where it is going to be administered. We are designing a planning appeal system which will enable more people to appeal more cheaply, so it is fairer and more equal, but to do that we are going to have to bear some administrative cost. That is literally the only bid that is on the table at the moment.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Given the extent to which environment affects all our ministries and the fact that in a way you are subsidising maybe health, should some of health's budget not come back to you?

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes, I think...

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Is environment sufficiently fought for in the Council of Ministers?

Chief Executive Officer:

I would ask the Minister to answer that.

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

It certainly is, but of course the difficulty that I face in the Council of Ministers is the same difficulty that I would face in the States Assembly, and to put it very succinctly there, we are putting in a funding bid to increase the number of footpaths around the Island and enhance them and make it much more pleasant for locals and tourists to walk around. The Minister for Health may be putting in a bid for a new scanner, an M.R.I. (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) scanner or something. You cannot vote against the scanner, as much as we would like to increase the footpaths.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Very quickly, if I may, I think the question that needs to be asked is that where the Council of Ministers are talking about two per cent unilateral cuts in every Department, irrespective of whether that Department has fat or whether it is lean and may be cutting into the bone already, you have told us that your budget has not changed, it has gone down in real terms. Was it since 2008?

Chief Executive Officer:

2008, but yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Since 2008. It seems to me from what we have heard is that, if anything, your Department could do with more money, not less. Of course I am sure all Departments would say that. Are you signed up to the two per cent cuts as a loyal member of the Council of Ministers with corporate responsibility? That is the first question.

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

The answer is yes, but I am not signed up to the two per cent cuts because I am a member of the Council of Ministers under corporate responsibility. I think the Government of the Island has a responsibility to spend less before it starts taxing its residents any more.

Deputy M. Tadier:

But is a unilateral cut of two per cent sensible when certain Departments have bigger budgets and maybe have more savings to make than others?

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

Well, two per cent across the board is relative whether you have got a £300 million or a £3 million budget. Your percentage cut is relative.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Not if your Department is inefficient. I am presuming - I do not know, but I would hope - that you would say your Department is run pretty efficiently and that there is no wastage there or there is minimal waste, but the same may not be able to be said of the Chief Minister's Department or the Treasury, for example, and because they are bigger Departments, they may have more scope for being able to accommodate cuts.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

If I can build on that, how are we going to make the environmental sustainability objectives of leaving the Island in a better condition than it is at the moment? How are we going to make that a reality if we are going to spend less on environmental education, for example?

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

I think we have changed priorities within the Department and certainly it is something which...an idea or a policy that I would like to enact in the Planning and Building Department, where we set down more guidelines and asked people to conform with the guidelines, rather than get them to submit lots of red tape and difficulty. The same may be the way we treat the countryside. We may have to say: "This is what we want to do. This is what we would like you to do. Please confirm with these rules and we will only interfere and bash you if you are obviously breaking them in a really bad way." I think we are just going to have to reprioritise the money we have into areas where we think...

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes. If we are taking large areas of money out of the budget further, we will be into conversations about ultimately just protecting what we have and not enhancing it. A lot of our work is about protection and we have done a lot of work in terms of adding waste and water regulations in the Island and protecting those. But you will see this in all governments, the awareness, the proactive side of the government spending tends to all get shrunk because of the pressures to just protect what we have.

[11:00]

Undoubtedly, £1 spent in awareness will undoubtedly save £10 down the line.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Sorry, can I just butt in there with a point, again on Deputy Tadier's point? We all appreciate you are under pressure and we all wish you had more money, but as we do not, how are you going to achieve any cut, given that you are suffering real cuts in real terms here?

Chief Executive Officer:

I think it is one of those areas. Firstly, one of the things we will have to look at is our workforce and how that is going to change naturally over the five-year period that we are now talking about. We are not unique in a States department. We have got an ageing workforce. Ageing is a relative term, is it not, but we have a number of people who will come out of our workforce because they will have to retire over the next so many years, so we will have to use that flexibility, because most of our cost is in our people. We have to use that flexibility when people leave us to maybe make a saving, so that is going to be on the agenda. That will mean that we need other people who are left in the Department to possibly be more generalist or we will need to cut things slightly differently. But that has got to play a big part of any solution.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Which, as the Chairman said, may well affect future investment.

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes. Then we are looking into areas: there is money from the Department that goes out for various initiatives. We spend money in various policy areas, enhancement of the environment areas. They would need to be looked at. Depending how big the number is, you end up ultimately thinking: "What do we need to keep protecting and regulating the environment we have now?" So we do need to keep regulating our land use and our water use and our waste disposal. We do not regulate air quality, although we have policies around air quality, and we have to regulate our marine environment and our sea. We do not have many people to do that. We also have to keep a firstline defence in terms of animal disease and plant disease and any notifiable pests, so you end up literally saying: "This is baseline. These are our blue light environmental services looking forward entitled from that" and then the nice to dos will ultimately get pressured.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Sorry, did you say there is no air quality monitoring going on?

Chief Executive Officer:

What I meant is we do not regulate.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I see.

Chief Executive Officer:

We do not have an air quality law, for instance.

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

We developed the air quality strategy in conjunction with...

The Connétable of St. Helier:

We are still measuring that?

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

Yes.

Chief Executive Officer:

Oh yes, we measure.

Director for Environmental Policy:

We are, but it is the Health Department that do that though.

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

The Health Department do the actual work.

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

Before Judy, can I just get back to funding for the countryside, and just something we need to make sure we are all clear about is that the vast majority of the grant aid payment for farmers and for the countryside comes from the Economic Development budget. I have already asked the Minister for a meeting in the very short term to discuss what his priorities are going to be in his Department, because the two major tranches of money that go into the countryside are the Single Area Payment, which is an amount of money for every vergee that is farmed, and the Quality Milk Payment, which is grant aid money that goes to dairy farmers when their milk conforms to high quality, which most of it...well, pretty much all of it does all the time. But those two funds are in the E.D. (Economic Development) budget and the Minister for Economic Development is under pressure, just like everybody else, and he is going to have to prioritise and have a look and see where his priorities are. He has got Locate, he has got Digital, he has got stimulating the economy, diversification. He has got a whole raft of other things. We will be very keen to pressurise him as much as we possibly can certainly not to cut that, but I am not saying...

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Before Deputy Martin comes in, can I just ask you how the grants to agriculture fund compares with the money that we spend on environmental sustainability?

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

Well, it is...

Deputy Chief Officer, Department of the Environment:

There is a link. Certainly the work, the £230,000 I think that sits in the Countryside Enhancement Scheme budget, which is our part of the Agri-Environmental Programme budget, is linked, so small-scale projects which are used to put...essentially, I would sort of bluntly put them as the sort of stuff you see on Countryfile a lot, to talk it through a layperson, so you will see better welfare, meadow management, you will see buffer strips being put in, you will see ecological corridors being put in. It is the stuff that could be considered to be a bit trite but is really quite important and the money that is spent does exactly what you suggest. It develops the sustainability of the Island, it is making the place look better, making the Island a better place from an ecological perspective and also from the wider health benefits as well. If that has to be removed at some point, then we have to take a holistic view as to what is it that doing, not just for the environment, not just for the team that implements that work from our Department, but from the wider perspective, from the health benefits and the transport benefits as well.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Just to try and pin you down, I understand your budget. To me, I think you said about the regulation and advising, so I see a lot of environment side of your work and from the Director for the Environment to exactly lay down what this means and what will happen. I have really two questions, and I think Steve, because the excellent presentation we got from the Director for the Environment the other day is going to be shown to all States Members, because we have the Strategic Plan. We also have a new long-term plan coming up and my basic question is there was some frightening stuff in there that we have got to deal with, water, electricity, liquid waste and so on, housing. Is there a figure that this is based on, a population figure we are basing this on over this new long-term plan that is going to be produced in 2015, and how long is the Council of Ministers' 2015 long-term plan? It is how far in the future are you looking and to what population? Because we, as States Members in the community, need to look at all these priorities against what you are advising, but it is not advising, it is literally: "If we do this, we will need that, that, that and that."

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

The long-term planning is something which does not happen very often. I am delighted that my side of the fence in the Environment Department came out with an energy plan out to 2050, because we see so few long-term plans in politics, mainly because the politicians are not around very long and they do not really want to look much very further than three, three and half, four years, maybe two terms. Trying to get people to commit to something now which is 30 or 40 years' work is really difficult, because it is always easy to say: "Oh well, it is a long-term plan. We

will start next year” and: “We will start next year.” But certainly you mention water and I do not know where the population figures are going, but we do know that by 2030, we are going to have an additional 14,000 old-age pensioners on the Island and the water company have extrapolated that a bit further and they think that by the time we get to that sort of time, 2030, 2040, we may need some additional water storage. That is a major impact on the environment in that part of the Island and certainly when you get back to sustainability, it is our job in the Planning Department to look at that and say: “How can we plan homes so they use less water?” Certainly you have baths and showers and white goods these days that use less, but there is always an expectation in the population now, as the standard of living rises, people expect dishwashers, they expect washing machines, they expect an awful lot that they would not have had in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. Everything adds a demand for water.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Sorry, Steve. Let us just concentrate on one figure of water in 2030. We may need...in fact, I think we will find out when we see more, we possibly will need, but you accused it on possibly the ageing population, but what baseline is needing more water in 2030 based on? Is it what we have today? Is it an increase? Are you doing today...

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

Well, per capita of population.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

...an increase in 10 per cent or 20 per cent so people know what we will need?

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

I am not sure if the number is per capita, but certainly use. Everybody in their homes uses more water because they use more various different machines these days. Certainly the metering of water has made a big difference to Jersey water. People do not leave their taps running all day long, they do not go watering their garden overnight because they are paying different tariffs and everybody now who has any interaction with Jersey Water gets a meter. I think that has been good, but I am not sure where we are looking to. Maybe Louise can tell us.

Director for Environmental Policy:

Yes, I can help. Most policy-makers are guided by the plus 350, 325 number, so the Island Plan is based on that population increase at the moment. The water that you were talking about, more water storage needed is based on the plus 350. At the moment, in the absence of a long-term population decision on immigration, we are looking at plus 350, so the baseline - and we talked about this in the presentation, did we not - the baseline is not zero, it is significant inward migration, and of course it is argued, understandably, that that is required to keep the economy

afloat, particularly with an ageing demographic. At the moment, most policies are plus 350. What I think is the aim of the long-term planning work, one of the key aims there is to establish what kind of a future the Island wants and what kind of a population you need to sustain that future.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can we ask you what that is from a factual point of view as an environmentalist rather than as a politician? We have talked about sustainable environment, and very quickly, it seems to me when we talk to environmentalists in the Jersey context, they say: "If you want environmental sustainability and if you want food security and self-sufficiency, we are already way past that" and I think you might have used that phrase yourself in the presentation.

Director for Environmental Policy:

Yes, I did.

Deputy M. Tadier:

To the point of maybe that kind of population would be between 5,000 and 20,000.

Director for Environmental Policy:

Yes. I think for food security, that is exactly right. If we were to grow the food on-Island that we wanted to eat, the carrying capacity of the Island would be...we are way past all of that. We stray into difficult territory when we start talking about population. I think from a purist biological point of view, you might suggest that the carrying capacity of the Island is what we can live on with the goods and services that we can produce on-Island. I think modern living is well beyond that. We live in a global network and I think that is fine. But I think the way that you baseline the decisions about the future size of the population, it has to be integral. I think if we are looking to a future where the environment dictated the number of people in the Island, we would not have an economy that could support the healthcare needs of the future, so there are huge and difficult tensions that we have to unpick. I think the long-term planning work is the first attempt for Government to do that, so it is flushing out those tensions and saying: "Okay, great. We want a future where every child is able to reach degree status," I do not know, some sort of metric like that. What does that mean in terms of the economy? What is that in expenditure? What does that cost us in infrastructure and what environmental trade-offs there might be? Sometimes they are substantial. There is no doubt that we will have to make difficult decisions and I think the important thing is that those decisions are made with the full evidence so that we do not sleepwalk into a scenario where we have set ourselves on a path that we do not really know where it is going to take us.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I guess the question is: is environmental sustainability as a phrase a misnomer in itself? Is it simply not achievable in any Western context and should we be instead be more honest in talking about environmental mitigation, because we know that we probably need to completely reinvent the economic model?

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

If you are talking in a complete whole environment, I think we are probably past being able to be completely sustainable on the Island. Now, what we can do is focus in on small areas or to maybe one, and energy may be tricky, but certainly looking to the future, there may be a way that we can create all the energy that we require on-Island, wind, tidal, solar, ground source. There is a number of different ways of doing it, but from a personal point of view, I think moving into the future, it has got to be a melange of everything. We cannot, to my mind, look to the future and see no increase in population, because what happens if you do that is that in 20 or 30 years' time, you will find half the people living on the Island are retired, they need massive healthcare. There is no business community, because there is not enough people working. Those that are working are having to pay Social Security to supplement the old-age pension of those that are retired. The young people leave the Island and then the amount of healthcare required for a smaller population does not make sense. You then have to send people off-Island for health. We have got to balance it all up and try and do a bit of everything.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Steve, I have never argued...I need some honest environmental and economic decisions to know where I, as a States Member and Scrutiny, want to put the population, but everyone says, the minute you mention population: "We need more housing." That is just a minute part and this is what I want, are you doing the line we have to do this and this?

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes. I think it is not...our work has not...

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Have you got the man power to do it, basically?

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes, so if we...we work on a decade timescale, so if we look back at the water and waste environments of the Island previous to the Waste and Water Laws, for instance, there came a point where the Island would not bear what was going on with its water and waste anymore, therefore we brought regulation in to change that and improve it. So we have done that. There is a point in terms...I think in the most recent past we have been far more protective of our coastline

and countryside through the last Island Plan debate than we have arguably previously. So there are bits of our environment where I think we are seeing some push back politically and publicly say: “No, that is not acceptable anymore, we want to protect that.”

[11:15]

The Line in the Sand – the Coastline Campaign – those sort of things we have seen from a land use perspective has really impacted, I think, on all of government behaviour around its countryside and its coast. Yes, I guess what we are saying is that there is always a live debate as to what is sustainability and we can pretty much say if the population hits this we are likely to need this level of infrastructure. This is the carrying capacity of the Island. It will vary depending on your perception of the environment but...

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Okay, I just have one final question. I am going to go back to water. We were told in 2013, looking at the population as of today, we will probably need more water and doing it in all different ways. Now, in the presentation at the States we were told major infrastructure or big decisions need minimum of a 10 year lead in period. We are now in 2015, you are talking 2030, so when will the States Members see the plan for the population to have enough water in 15 years’ time, given it is a minimum of 10 years lead in.

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

I think the answer to that is probably not in this Department, it is probably with Jersey Water, but certainly we work with them very closely.

Deputy Chief Officer, Department of the Environment:

Through the introduction of the Water Resources (Jersey) Law 2007, that was a joint effort by both the Department and Jersey Water to try and get a handle on and then regulate the extraction of water from ground, which then moves on to the work that we are doing. So we know what the volume is there and that then gets fed back to Jersey Water who can make use of it to try to forecast the future need of the Island. What our Department is also heavily involved is to try to ensure that the quality of that water is not then wasted, so we are not polluting it to the extent that it is no longer a viable source of human drinking water. So while we have got very heavy impacts on the question you are asking, the specific provision of it very much lies with Jersey Water, we sit around the edges and regulate and we offer advice on how best they can perhaps deliver that. But ultimately when it comes down to the future planning for the volumes, we have heard historically of potential need for expansion of Val de la Mare reservoir and perhaps an increase in the size of the dam wall there. It is very much up to Jersey Water to dictate whether that is

required or whether there is an alternative method of finding those water supplies from the Island resources.

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

We get plenty of water falling out of the sky on to Jersey and during the winter a lot of it runs out to the sea because we cannot store any more because our storage capacity is at maximum. The difficulty is, as we all know, we go into long period of almost drought, apart from when it is drought, and that is when the fun really starts. The other alternative, of course, is to look at other ways of producing water and we are surrounded by the sea and we have had a desalination plant for many years in Jersey, we are now in reverse osmosis now, are we not? So we do not burn a huge amount of electricity boiling but we do it by other means. There may be ways in the future where we can find a less energy hungry or more easily acquired energy to change sea water into drinking water, into fresh water. That may be a way of reducing the need to store more. I think if climate change is something that starts to affect us we may have to think about prolonged periods of dry weather and whether we have enough storage on the Island.

Chief Executive Officer:

The other thing that plays into this is the demand management side. Certainly Jersey Water have been rolling out their metering programmes, certainly through the building by-laws we are looking at water efficiency as well as in new builds. So there is a tune to play on the demand side as well that demand is not going to be a linear progression as per population. I think the population can grow but demand management can ease off the need for resource use as well so it is very hard for Jersey Water to take a line graph and just say: "Right, that is when we need to start building more capacity." But I think we are some way off that at the moment. But, yes, you are right to say it is a very big lead in time from a construction project, environmental project if we had to do that but I think we are some years off that yet. But I think they would like to see that they have exhausted all their opportunities of demand management metering, energy efficiency and also just basic things like, you know, making people more water wise around using water, washing their vehicles, planting whatever they plant in their gardens, all of that, it all plays part of the equation as to where we use our water.

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

If you want to talk long-term planning - and we might all smile at this one - go away from water and let us look at waste and let us look at our energy from waste plant. We know how long it took to get the decision to move from Bellozane to La Collette, we know roughly what the life of the plant we are currently using is, and when you add in a massive delay for States deliberation we should be quite soon trying to think about what we are doing after our current energy from waste plant gets to the end of its useful life, because it will not be very long down the road that we are going to have to make some conscious decisions as to whether that is the path we want to follow, whether

we want to go for a considerable greater percentage of recycling or whether we want to look at other ways of disposing of our waste. But that is a long-term decision and it is one that we are going to have to start thinking about quite shortly. Even though to some of us the energy from waste plant is a quite a new build.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Will that be in the new 2015 Council of Ministers long-term plan? We do not do it, we do not even have depreciation, we just think: "Oh, we have got something new, it will last until it falls off..."

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

I cannot imagine it would be top of the list of the Council of Ministers' strategic thought for 2015 but certainly long-term it must figure. We are talking...

Chief Executive Officer:

I can help. What we have started to do in the last couple of years is think long-term capital investment as well. What are the things that we have that are going to wear out frankly? If we look at that from an environment perspective, we have a lot of footpaths that we own and control, we have a weather radar, we have a fisheries protection vessel, we have some fixed infrastructure ourselves. So we have to, within that sort of 20 year look...we will need to buy a new boat at some point, no doubt. We keep refitting it so it keeps lasting a bit longer but at some point it is going to wear out. The weather radar is constantly being updated to make sure we can predict the weather properly. Our footpath network is hungry for resource. We are trying to encourage more people to use it, we have got a lot of people walking, riding horses, cycling on them and there is a lot of erosion as a result. We are starting to think about that. The other departments are dropping in their longer term capital, certainly from a T.T.S. (Transport and Technical Services) perspective they are thinking about the sewage treatment works, the energy from waste plant, so it is a huge sum of money if you start looking 20 years forward as to what we all own and what we all have to maintain. At least we have started to do that.

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

I think, to be fair, the main services - we have got the drains, we have got water, we have got energy from electricity - are all thinking...they have to think long term. J.E. (Jersey Electricity), I know their Normandy 3 cable came online just a little bit too late, but they are thinking long term. They are looking now at how the Channel Island grid might get together and how that interacts with France. So these big companies do have to think long term and I am sure they are. It may be that it is us as politicians who need to start thinking a little bit more long term.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Just using water as an example for the funding, am I right in thinking that the capital costs which are inevitable for water treatment plants, et cetera, are purely the responsibility of Jersey Water and they will themselves micro-manage that by putting charges up or whatever. It will not come out of Environment's budget?

Chief Executive Officer:

No, that is correct. That is part of Jersey Water's capital programme and their forward look on their water network, which is why they are putting a lot of emphasis on that demand management metering because if you take the reduce, manage and invest principle, if you can reduce and then manage what you have got better, you do not have to come up with a lot of capital investment. We have less capital investment. So they are trying to put as much wise use of water into the process because it saves them as a company and bill payers money down the line. So it is a Jersey Water job.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

So consumers ultimately will pay.

Chief Executive Officer:

Ultimately, yes.

Deputy Chief Officer, Department of the Environment:

I know we met initially earlier on, prior to last week, to talk about what the Department does and we touched on it a very high level but it might be useful but it might be useful, if I could offer on the Minister's behalf perhaps, to have an opportunity to go through that a bit more rigidly just to tell you what we do and what we do not do. Because if there is confusion around there into the future as to who is responsible for delivering what that will only be more scrutinised as time moves on. It would perhaps be useful for the Panel to get a better understanding.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

It would be. I understand now the provider - we can educate and they will also with charging try and stop demand - is policy making and decisions that go on in there if you need more reservoirs, if you need another one. These are big, massive decisions and remember what happened with Queen's Valley.

Director for Environmental Policy:

I think your point is really well made, often our infrastructure providers and our utilities do a great job of managing, so for example the investment programme from Jersey Electricity to keep our cabling up to scratch and able to deliver in peak demand is really well done. Where I think

government perhaps have not been as proactive as we could be is giving them long-term policy guidance. So while we are saying to Jersey Electricity: "Jersey is committed to low carbon electricity purchased from France, go away and make your investment decisions based on that." Jersey Water: "What are our water policies into the long-term around demand management so you can best calculate the lifespan of your infrastructure?" So I think long-term policies are critical to help providers to provide, to state the obvious, and I think maybe the long-term vision, which we are very hopeful will feature these kind of tricky discussions, will help guide those decisions more successfully to the providers to work with us. I think previously we have had some sort of -- we have been somewhat arm's length and that is appropriate because a lot of them are trading companies. We work together often on technical issues very successfully but I think perhaps government maybe has not given the guidance previously that would be helpful for those companies and one would hope, that as we mature in our long-term plan and thinking, that becomes a better partnership.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Can I bring you into Town? You have been talking about the need for the Island to take more housing units and there is a general view the Council of Ministers has discovered St. Helier and it has now found its way on to the strategic priorities, there is clearly going to be a need if we are going to preserve our green spaces and have a line in the sand for our beaches and so that the bulk of development comes into St. Helier. I understand you are reviewing all these master plans that have been commissioned, often by off-Island consultants at huge expense, to bring forward a master plan for St. Helier that will enable St. Helier to take the majority of new units. Could you tell the Panel how that process is going?

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

Yes, I can, Constable. I have just only this week received the first draft of the future St. Helier position paper, I am hopeful that by Monday or Tuesday next week it would be in a fit enough state to go to not only yourself as Constable but you as a Scrutiny Panel and Council of Ministers and I think from that point onwards we then...although we very much hope to be able to lead, we then move into a territory where we work with others at all points because this is not just a future St. Helier plan involving the Planning and Environment Department, it is going to be the Parish, it is going to be politicians, it is going to be user groups, retailers, it is going to the Constable in his capacity as Constable. It is borne out of two decisions, one that I think the Council of Ministers finally...and I go back to where we started, I think I have got them to realise that the countryside and the coastline is more important, it does need to be protected maybe more. But I think certainly the Council of Ministers are more appreciative of our green and pleasant land than they have been previously. But because we know through the Island Plan that most of the building is going into St. Helier, I think there has been a realisation that while we are going to do that we have to do it as well as we possibly can and I think everybody appreciates and can see the ability for St. Helier to

become such a bigger matter than it is currently, and that means we want - and we spoke about it earlier - the health consequences of your environment. That means the size of the home you live in, in other words a flat or home or whatever, the amenities space you have around it, whether it is a small amount of private amenity or whether you share it with others. It is when you travel to work hopefully you will be walking or cycling but if you travel to work through St. Helier it is a pleasant, green, open, airy, not polluted and not congested. That then feeds into lifestyle, quality of life, health and there are so many different facets to the future of St. Helier scheme that I would be here for an hour, and especially if I opened it out to my officers who have got even more ideas. So we are hoping really that the future St. Helier scheme...we know it will involve everybody. There is going to be massive pieces of work and lots of different pieces of work all coming together under the heading "Future St. Helier" but we are itching to get going.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Do you think there is a danger, though, that we have had these master plans that have...I mean, the Willie Miller study, for example, I would say effectively ignored by government. The North of Town Masterplan by Hopkins several years ago suggested we build houses around what is currently the town park. So that did not get off to a flying start. None of the environmental or public realm improvements that were considered as an important quid pro quo for the new housing units have been delivered. None of the changes to traffic have been delivered. None of the footpath widening or tree planting have been delivered.

[11:30]

So is there not a worry that the masterplan may secure the additional units in St. Helier without the compensating public run improvements?

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

I think that is down to me and my team and the leadership that I will get from the others that get involved in the St. Helier plan. I think the Planning Department have a certain ability to ask for assistance when it comes to people who want permission to develop their property, and I think we will be looking at, just as previous Minister have looked at, percentage for art. There may be places where we want to continue percentage for art, similarly there may be other areas where we say: "No, instead of your percentage for art we might want you to make a contribution to landscape or tree planting or benches or wider pavements."

Chief Executive Officer:

The Environment Department and its decisions, certainly on land use creates a lot of value and it is absolutely appropriate I think for some of that value to be captured, to be reinvested back into the place where the value is being captured. Not only does it benefit the scheme that you are

permitting, it benefits the place that you are permitting it in. So I think the movement strategy and the public realm strategy we are calling “Future St. Helier” but it is actually ‘Renaissance St. Helier’. St. Helier is already the seat of government, it is the primary retailing, commercial, residential and transport hub of the Island and the Channel Islands so it already fulfils all of those roles. So we are not talking about recreating a place, we are talking about enabling it to become alive again and fulfil its potential.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I would say it is already alive but I take your point that even better is what the Minister said.

Chief Executive Officer:

I think we do need...one of the pieces of work which will come out of this is it will be a pretty picture but it will have some policies beneath it, including an infrastructure tariff of some kind, and we are going to need to see how we can create value and capture some of that to reinvest back into greenery, public realm calming, those sort of things.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Yes, can I press you on one particular study, the 2008 Open Space study that your department commissioned, which has not had a lot of publicity. I am not even sure that the public know some of the statistics that they came up with. Comparing the amount of open space, for example, that a person living in St. Helier has to a person living in central London. I think one of the challenges you may face is to show at the end of these additional units, and we must be looking at in excess of 1,000 new units just in the north of town area that are being planned at the moment, will a person living in St. Helier have more open space per person when these new units go in than they have at the moment? Will that amount of open space as a measurable statistic be monitored, will it be published?

Chief Executive Officer:

One of the key things we have said in this scoping document, but also some of these other master plans, we do need to create better public spaces. I think public spaces come in all manner and forms but whether they small pocket parks or just the odd 10 square metres on a corner of a junction with a bench and things in it, I think we have to create a multitude of different spaces. St. Helier is a very tightly formed town so the ability for us to create vast new areas of space can be quite challenging but there are some opportunities there, for sure. The North of Town Masterplan highlighted a few areas where we could create some smaller spaces. I think we have to take every opportunity to do that, to create new smaller spaces, but also link them together better and have public realm corridors which we can be greened so you feel like you are in a space rather than you are just walking down a very narrow pavement on a wet car dominated road.

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

I might just add here, if you look the plan as Andy just alluded, you have got quite tight roads and we build up to boundaries that are historic in Jersey, land is precious we use every little bit we can find, but pavements and roads, bits that are covered in tarmac, take up quite a lot of town and if we can free those areas from cars all of sudden they become open spaces that can be utilised for maybe better things. I think we are going to have to be big and bold in this project. We are going to have to have some out of the box thinking and we must not be frightened to say we are going to come up with - in some small areas of town - some quite radical ideas which might eliminate cars altogether. But in the area where those cars have been parked previously or the roads that the cars have traversed, all of a sudden they become open areas for people to use. You take the tarmac away and you replace it with something else, all of a sudden a small section of road might become a small green park.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Do you not think, though, there is a danger that the calculations that were made in the North of Town Masterplan around open space literally calculated every little bit of...you mention the bit on the corner of pavement, the small spaces, and the overall figure was, hey presto, that is more than you had before. Whereas when it comes to a family with kids who want to let off steam, they do need the big space. They need to be able to run around. I think that is where Central London has such a lot to offer its residents. They have parks which are big enough to get lost in. That is why I do not think you can lump them altogether.

Chief Executive Officer:

You are right. We also have to take the opportunity to get...we have had other conversations about getting St. Helier residents into the countryside, the immediate country hinterland, and how we can use our access infrastructure to get circular walks and other ways of people accessing open space and the countryside. We need to do more with branding of those and being very clear what these routes are, if it is an hour circular walk or a three-hour circular walk.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

The St. Helier country park was approved ...

Chief Executive Officer:

That sort of concept. So I think we have to blend...

The Connétable of St. Helier:

It was approved in the Island Plan as a feasibility study, which is yet to be done.

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

The other thing I come back to, something we were talking about earlier, the States commitment to the environment and how much of priority do we make it. It would be very interesting to bring quite a large states owned site in St. Helier to the Assembly and say: "What do the Assembly feel about flattening it and turning it into a park?" as opposed to flattening it and rebuilding for an expensive office development or more housing.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Do you have something in mind?

Deputy M. Tadier:

The Esplanade Quarter, perhaps.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

That was proposed.

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

There may have been a view before we started building on any of the Esplanade Quarter. Some people were certainly of view that the whole area should be covered in green...

The Connétable of St. Helier:

That was something I took to the States as a proposition and it was defeated, the idea that the Esplanade Quarter should be a kind of Central Park for St. Helier that in 50 years' time would be as important as Central Park is in New York. But, as I say, that was not accepted by the Assembly and I have certainly moved on because you cannot keep fighting the same battle year after year. I think you probably agree the Esplanade Quarter is now something that the States have agreed to develop for a financial services quarter.

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

Similarly the States may agree for the future benefit of the Parish if they can identify an area in St. Helier which is desperately in need because it does not have anything like it in that area, a green open space, maybe they own a site, maybe we should consider it.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

That is certainly worth pursuing. Can I take us down to La Collette because that is a reclaimed site that was originally going to be offered as open space. There was going to be a corniche around it. I always thought it would be a great place to run the international motor race around this tongue or corniche of land, there as a possibility of walks, boating, possibility of fishing, leisure and so on, and certainly for the last 10 or so years we have been told that because of Buncefield we

can more or less ignore or discount any opportunities for La Collette to provide open space. Again, the previous Island Plan accepted an amendment I brought which was to examine the feasibility of opening up La Collette for public access. Again I gather that has gone absolutely nowhere. What is your vision for La Collette?

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

To address the immediate point you have made, I certainly three years ago went for a tour of La Collette, as you may well do yourself, and it seemed to me that the east facing coast, if you like, that we have reclaimed there, which mounds covered in soil, were just starting to turn green has got huge potential for Islanders to enjoy. The sea walk, if you like, from Havre des Pas around and through into the La Collette area, if at all possible, must be continued out into La Collette because there is some massive amenity space there. In fact people do not know how big it is because they cannot get to it at the moment. There is huge potential for green open space in La Collette facing east, the bit that has been filled in, and that must be pursued if at all possible. The other thing that I particularly have made a point of since I became Minister, and we currently have a plan on our desk for a new recycling centre at La Collette, I want my Department to focus very carefully on the fact that the West of Albert, or Waterfront, we guard every square foot as much as we possibly can. It is so precious and valuable. We do not seem to apply those same sort of thought processes to La Collette, which is obviously very commercial, noisy, dusty and dirty. But I have impressed upon my Department that I think we must apply the same rules at La Collette to make sure we do not waste anything in the near future so in 10, 15 years' time we do not come back and say: "We did not do a very good job of planning that out. Look how much space we have wasted" because the La Collette space is reclaimed land just like West of Albert. It is just as precious in some ways as West of Albert. If we can get over the Buncefield issues all of a sudden La Collette is going to be potentially even more precious.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I think we have the same vision then. But are you progressing this requirement in the Island Plan that we do seek to get over the Buncefield issues as you say, because that is what is holding us back?

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

I think we must try as much as we possibly can to get over the Buncefield issues. It has had a huge impact on what we can do at La Collette. We had some plans, everybody has ideas of what we might do with La Collette and Buncefield seems to scupper everything at the moment. It is a huge imposition, we have invested a lot of money and time in La Collette which we will not get to see the best benefit of it if Buncefield remains. I do not know...

Chief Executive Officer:

Unfortunately there is a health and safety zone around it and while it is still there in its current format the zone is so big...I think certainly through the energy plan and the energy policy, where the Island goes with its hydrocarbon use and storage, that has to be the debate around freeing up the La Collette area for other things. So while it has big fuel depot in the middle of it unfortunately we have to have a health and safety zone around it which prevents huge amounts of public going into that area. But I think we will see, and we are seeing, trends on hydrocarbon use reducing. I think it is a long-term picture but whether that fuel dump will stand in that form for ever, I do not think it will, I think it will change over time but, again, it is the longer energy picture which will help out the La Collette solution.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I do not think people are going to wait for that amount of time to have their access around La Collette restored. I think surely it is a matter of finding a risk management system that allows people to be able to walk around, go fishing, do boating. We are not talking about hundreds of thousands of people after all, we are just talking about opening up the access...

Deputy Chief Officer, Department of the Environment:

The big issue is accommodation down there. It is very difficult to put accommodation down or office blocks with that risk there. If there is a fix, as you suggest, about temporary access as we have already got at 10.00 a.m. the first Monday evacuation plan going on...

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

But there is a bit of hypocrisy over the fact we have a cycle route which comes in from the east of the Island and traverses very close to the energy from waste plant but when you turn right to go in between the energy from waste plant and La Collette to turn into St. Helier, you are not allowed to go left, which is the direction of where the...so we are allowing our public to get quite close in one way, depending what they are doing, but we are not allowing them to get close if they want to go for a walk and enjoy the scenery. So we must have a look at that and see if there is something we can do.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Montfort, you wanted to talk a bit about housing?

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes, before I do I think there is an elephant in the room around which we have been dancing, which is population policy. I know we touched on it and we talked about out of the box thinking. It seems to me that public opinion, and that does not mean it is right or wrong necessarily, is against population growth. There seems to be that perception out there. One only needs to think about

when we had that massive snow storm the other day which brought the Island to a halt. If we had plus 350 or more coming into the Island for the next few decades, that is only going to put extra pressure on resources. I know there is a policy traditionally called “Reduce, Reuse and Recycle” that is part of the Eco-Active, it seems we are pursuing a policy of increase rather than reduce with all of the resource implications that go with it. So my question really is to do with the interim population policy of plus 350 and if we are thinking out of the box, why could we not be looking at a steady state population or even a reduced population with different economic assumptions to do with tax and spend?

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

That is a good question and of course that type of policy change would need to be taken to the States Assembly. It is all very well that we around this table might think that we need to reduce population but it is not a decision the Environment Department can take on their own any more than any other Minister can decide on his own. It is going to have to be a decision that comes through the States Assembly and the Chief Minister will have his view, the Council of Ministers will have their view and I am sure they will bring to the Assembly for debate to see where it moves to. Yes, I am sure we would all love to live in an Island with less people, with more space for each of us to enjoy and more space to build bigger houses, have more cars or whatever.

[11:45]

Just to generally enjoy a larger space individually. The difficulty that we face, I believe, is that we need to find ways to keep the economy buoyant and it is very difficult to see how we do that in the current economic climate and moving forward without importing at least high value and important people that we do not have locally if we are going to continue to diversify the economy. It is a really difficult balancing act we face. On one hand we could just say: “Just let everybody come in, we will really get the economy going” and we probably would but then we would have all the other pressures of population growth. I cannot say how disappointed I am that over the last 10 or 15 years the States have turned the tap off on the building of social housing and other large projects which has seen the demise of the construction industry and we are now seeking to turn the tap flat out again and expecting the construction industry locally to take up the slack. I see huge pressure on the construction industry asking to be allowed to import people to help us build all these construction projects that we have in place. I think it is going to be very important that the States as a whole sets out some policies so that if they do have to come over to help with the construction that we have got planned, we find ways that they cannot remain on the Island after they have finished because as a way of increasing our population very quickly, that would be it.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Could I ask about the plus 350, you were obviously sitting in our position not so long ago, you have moved on to bigger and better things, during the debate on the interim policy you said that: “I personally do not think that what we have before us is a proper population policy. The proposition gives figures which we know we have no intention of keeping to and to me that is hypocrisy and I want no part of it.” Unfortunately you do have to have a part of that now because you have signed up to it in two ways. You ended up voting for that proposition and now, as Minister, you have inherited it anyway. Have you got any intention of sticking to those figures of plus 350?

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

I think the important thing now is that the interim policy becomes the proper policy and we have a proper debate and we set a number and we decide where the number is going to be or we decide if there is going to be a number at all. The difficulty that we face is whether you set a number of 200 or 300 or 400, as you approach that number...if you get to three or four short and you have only got three or four licences left and somebody comes forward with a fantastic scheme which is the best thing since sliced bread and they want 50 licences, what do you say?

Deputy M. Tadier:

What did you mean by that, that we have no intention of sticking to it? Do you mean in your opinion at that time we were going to exceed the plus 350?

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

Yes, I did and I think my views have probably been borne out. I think it was a difficult debate for me because I felt we probably did not need to have it at all.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Is it not true from your Department's point of view that if you have 500 people living in a sustainable way, environmentally sustainable way, who come into the Island that that has the same impact as 250 people who live in a prolific way in terms of the environment? So it is not really about numbers, it is about how people live?

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

That is true. That is true but one cannot imagine that we are in a position to allow those people, those 250 that come into the Island, to live in a sustainable way. I can only imagine that if we wanted them to do that they would need an awful lot of space.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I am not talking about being self-sufficient, I am talking about people conscious of the impact their lives have on the environment.

Deputy Chief Officer, Department of the Environment:

I think that is only one part. There has to be an infrastructural aspect to that as well. So it would not just be that 250 coming in that would be expected to act in a more environmentally sustainable manner, it would be what would we do with the existing sewage treatment works, for example, the sewage network?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I do not mean that the 250 people who come in need to be environmental saints, what I am saying is that if the whole Island population was...and if you had the resources to get this message across that the whole Island needed to be more environmentally sustainable, and the Island could take more population without any impact on its...

Director, Environmental Policy:

If you reduce the environmental footprint, the carbon footprint of the people who are here you create some headroom, do you not, for people to live that way. I think what we are talking about in some areas...some wins are quite easy, you can use less electricity, less energy quite easily by behavioural changes and we can make those changes with helpful messaging and guiding people in the right way. Other wins are harder fought and sometimes you need to be punitive if you are going to get those wins out there. I think that is the point, you know, eventually the Council of Ministers and the States Assembly itself will come to a view on what it feels the Island's population needs to be. If as a result of that the decision is that the Island needs to welcome extra people to the Island for quite some time, so over 350 let us say or even up to 350, I think what we need to be prepared to do as a Department and as government is help people incentivise and perhaps regulate them into living in a manner that the Island can sustain. It was something that we talked about in my presentation: do you go for carrots or do you go for sticks? You clearly need both and we are pretty good at carrots, I would say. You have mentioned Eco-Active, there is lots of nice messaging around pollution, all these sorts of things. Maybe what we might see in the future, maybe, is to incentivise lower impact living with regulation. That is a possibility but we would have to consider if we were having to see a significant population increase but we were going to protect our resources. I think that is what we are seeing cross the world.

Deputy M. Tadier:

In terms of joined up thinking, the issue we have is if we assume that even the 350 is what was going to be stuck to, these 350 new people coming to the Island will not have their qualifications, they will have to wait 10 years to live here. It is not as if they can choose to live in an environmentally advanced building, they have to accept what is available in the unqualified sector. There is no regulation at all for private rentals, there are no minimum standards at all that we are seeing and it has been delayed coming from Housing. When I asked the Minister for Housing this week about putting empty properties to good use, it was very much a 'no can do' that I perceived.

She did say something interesting, that landlords have a social responsibility to make sure their properties are put to good use. Is that something that you would concur with?

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

Yes, I think so. As you were talking there I was just thinking about car parking, because certainly something I am trying to impress on not necessarily the Department but people who are coming forward with developments to create car parking spaces is that what we must do is to make sure that every car parking space we have in St. Helier is used as much as it possibly can throughout the 24 hours of every day. So that where we have private spaces which are maybe not used during the day because the residents have gone, there is a potential there for off-street parking for maybe commuters and similarly where we have a commercial scheme that comes forward with maybe 50 spaces for the workers, they go home at night, let us make sure that the rest of St. Helier have access to maybe 30 or 40 of those spaces for overnight parking. I think it is going to be a little bit like that with Housing. It will be much more complicated and tricky but if you have something in St. Helier and in Jersey, in the future we are going to need to make the most of everything we have got. If you apply the car parking scenario you want to use it as much as you can 24 hours a day or as many hours as possible. We can apply that to everything else. We have to be creative about how we do things. Empty buildings are not clever. Why should we put pressure on trying to build more because we have not got places for people to live or what have you, or schools or anything? I am sure if we took every building in St. Helier that is empty and has been empty for 18 months, knocked it all down and put them together it would be quite a nice little space.

Deputy M. Tadier:

So what do we do? How do we incentivise the usage of what are currently the unoccupied properties?

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

There are many, many different ways of doing it. I am not sure that it would come out of this Department but the Housing Department and others. In London recently, the government have now put an additional tax on properties that are left empty I believe. Flats that are not rented out.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Would you support that?

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

I support the principle of making the best use of everything you have got. As a Planning Department...well, I was going to say personally, and I have already mentioned it to my officers, I want to use the Planning Department for planning ahead. What we are here for is to make plans

for the future of Jersey. Passing applications from applicants who have no intention of building what they have applied for I find frustrating. It gets bashed back at us all the time: "Why do we need more housing? We know we have got 1,500 flats which are passed out there." We have got a lot of building passed through this Department that the applications are stamped approved and are not being built. We get criticised for that. It is not really our fault. I do not find that very good planning. I would like people who come forward with plans to build, get it approved, go away and build them. I do not like the idea of being...

The Connétable of St. Helier:

You could refuse to renew them, I suppose.

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

That may be one of a whole list of different methods that we could use for trying to encourage people to build what they apply for.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

You touched on it before, you dig your first trench and then you have got past first base, have you not? So you have to be much more stringent on what you do.

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

You look to other jurisdictions where they put taxes on roofs, people build houses and just forget to put the roof on. Find other ways of insulating and waterproofing. If you go to cities in the Middle East, for example, where all you have got rebar sticking out of the tops of buildings because of the roof tax.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Going back to Montfort's earlier point which he raised to the Minister for Housing, she answered it on behalf of her Ministry but in the general context of property tax reform, I agree that there seems to be no reason why empty houses should not be subject to an additional tax.

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

Well, it might be taxed, it might be other things. Certainly the Constable and I would be very agreeable in St. Helier where shops are empty, we would like to see them utilised. The last thing we want in our High Street is empty shops and if we can encourage them even to have pop up shops for a month or two months or something...

The Connétable of St. Helier:

In fact, we have so few empty shops, even in the recession, that we struggled to find sites for pop up shops, because every empty shop in the precinct will always have somebody waiting in the wings to take it over. So we are very lucky in that respect.

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

Yes, that is good. But getting back to houses, empty houses, there will be 1,000 different ways we can apply a policy but the principle of property being left empty in Jersey while there is pressure on us to build more property for other people elsewhere cannot be right. It is simple as that. I would not want to get into any detail or near detail but the principle of houses being empty while there is pressure on us to build social or whatever houses for...

Deputy M. Tadier:

To some extent we have talked about that, I will not labour it too long, but I think you have touched on it, the similar scenario is properties that have fallen into disrepair. We obviously know the high profile Plémont, which if there was a different policy applied at an earlier stage we would not have had to have been in these very controversial debates. There were other sites that just seemed to fall into dilapidation, which are ruinous and they are not being put to good use either. Is that something the Department is cognisant of?

The Minister for Planning and Environment:

There is a number of issues which are involved in the subject you touch on there. Certainly I think as Minister I have powers...

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes, there are powers. The way we have utilised them previously is around keeping buildings wind and watertight, and to a certain extent at a fair bare minimum level in terms of safety. The moment you then stray into other areas...you can apply it more stringently to get aesthetic gain but where do you then draw the line as to what is a good improvement. I think we would all have examples of: "I wish they would paint that building again" or: "I wish they would replace their gutters" there is always a line of public taste in terms of where you would apply that. But I think as a result of that the government has kept a very low level of intervention. So as long as the building is safe that is about as far as we go, rather than getting into details about how it looks.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Something like the old Portelet Hotel. We do not necessarily want to talk specifics but that is a building that had function, it is not being used currently and it is standing there derelict as far as I know.

Chief Executive Officer:

As the Minister said, I think we have to be able to offer more carrots to get people to use their buildings differently. We are going to see buildings, a lot of secondary office space in town especially, come up and landlords tend to hope that they are going to get a new tenant and they will keep the rent at a certain level and it may take a year or two. They may reduce for a bit. It takes quite a long time for a landlord of a building to think: "Right, that is it, I am not going for that use, let me look for something else." So it is all very down to the individual as to what, to be honest, their own financial circumstances are. Whether they can afford to keep a building vacant and hope that government will change its policy and they will make a lot of money in the future, or they may be in a situation: "I need to make some money from that this year." So we did get a real variation of owners and tenants. So I think you need to look at other carrots to say: "Can we bring other buildings back into use?" I think we can look at our planning policies that we apply in secondary areas. Again, incentivise, if the area as a whole is uplifting through greenery and public realm you often see buildings come back into different uses as well. It is a pretty hard cocktail of measures. I do not think one size fits all but in some cases I think we may wish to, as a government, take a firmer hand on it.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Can I draw things to a close? Thank you for that, Andy. It is 12.00 p.m. so we have run out of time. It has been very useful and wide-ranging. Can I thank the Minister, the Deputy of St. Martin, Steve Luce, and you all for very helpful answers to our questions? Can I thank William and Leah on the recording device, and the media and the public for coming? We look forward to taking forward these ideas with you in a constructive way as your Scrutiny Panel. Thank you very much.

[12:00]