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Connétable Mike Jackson
Chair, EHI Panel
BY EMAIL

19 March 2021

Dear Mike

Re: Written Questions – Government Plan 2021 Ministerial Response

Thank you for your letter dated 11 March 2021 and please see response to your questions below.

R3 - The Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism Sport and Culture should, by the end of Q1 2021, put in place suitable protocols to ensure a more collaborative approach to their involvement in the Jersey National Park project and in the support extended to the Jersey National Park.

- 1. Minister, you agreed with this recommendation and noted that a revised Rural Economy Strategy was being developed in Q1. Could you briefly outline how updates to the framework for the Jersey National Park Policy (being worked on currently) will achieve the desired outcomes for enhanced collaboration?**

The new RES will contain a policy proposal specific to the ongoing development of the JNP which will indicate how responsibility for the project is delivered with input from both Environment and Economy – and Officers from both departments have been assigned to be included as advisers in regular meetings of the JNP's management board which has been set up as Limited Company.

Notwithstanding this cooperation at officer level to help ensure the Company operates within environmental policies and best practice there remains public confusion between the designation of what is a planning protection zone in the island plan, and the Jersey National Park Ltd which has been assigned responsibility by the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture. I am planning to address this in the language used in draft Island Plan to reflect that the Coastal National Park is just that.

- 2. How will this be monitored to ensure that that the written protocols are actioned?**

Formal quarterly meetings are to be held between the JNP and Economy Officers, in accordance with Economy ALO management protocols – and Environment officers giving advice will be included in these meetings. This process will enable a formal record of meeting minutes to be kept and the process includes a regular performance review of the ALO.

R5- Given the extensive crossover between the two remits of Infrastructure and Environment, both Ministers should put in place suitable protocols to ensure more joined up working, with a greater emphasis on breaking down silos and adopting a more collaborative approach. Both Ministers should report back to the Panel by the end of Q1 2021 with an action plan as to how this will be achieved going forward.

- 3. Given that this recommendation was made based on a key finding which showed a lack of collaboration and joint working in relation to the reduction of funds for the Island Public Realm capital project, could you explain your reasons for rejecting this recommendation?**

The recommendation was rejected on the basis that each Minister has a distinct portfolio, and therefore distinct legal duties under said portfolio. Where specific projects cross portfolios, the most time effective and efficient way of discussing these and ensuring collaboration, is through the normal processes such as the Council of Ministers, or specific meetings as and when needed.

As I have explained the two projects are distinct and have separate objectives and are subject to different political leadership. The Planning zone is an exercise of a statutory power, the Coastal National Park limited is an initiative to gain wider public benefit from recreational, leisure use. This needs to be recognised in our processes.

- 4. In your response, it was noted that joint meetings occur weekly with the Director General for IHE to ensure cross portfolio briefings. In your view, is this type of collaboration sufficient and does it provide the adequate opportunity for effective collaborative working and to resolve matters that cross over remits?**

The meetings are a useful way for each IHE minister to be appraised of issues crossing the department and potentially crossing political portfolios. It is the responsibility of senior officers to ensure the relevant Ministers are appraised of matters relating to their portfolios, and therefore these meetings serve to allow this.

- 5. In your view, how could collaborative working across remits be further improved?**

Coordination of functions across all Ministries is a wider challenge given the wide scope of functions and pressures on Ministers. This has been particularly so during Covid. Ministers have to rely on delegation to their officers to identify and report where problems arise. This has highlighted particular procedural difficulties because of the inherent problems of the organisational structure established by the former CEO (Target Operating Model). It is my intention to discuss these with the new Interim CEO and review. In the meantime, I will seek to deal with policy issues arising with colleague Ministers to try to resolve them as they arise.

R16 - The Minister for the Environment should seek to ensure going forward that a wide variety of reputable, independent research on marine resources related matters is drawn upon by Government, and given the implications arising from Brexit, endeavour to find ways to collaborate and engage with voluntary and third sector organisations to form mutually beneficial partnerships and new, innovative ways of working.

- 6. Minister you accepted our recommendation. It was noted within your response that in particular, Brexit and the TCA agreement on fishing would require substantial additional investment in scientific resources, could you briefly explain the type of scientific resources you were alluding to and the desired outcomes from those resources?**

Delivery of a marine research programme has always been part of the Marine Resources portfolio and despite very limited resources, officers have been involved in many projects, with results either published in peer reviewed scientific journals, forming part of a wider scientific endeavours, or general reporting for Government. However, there is an increased requirement under the TCA,

in addition to general ethos to protect and conserve our natural resources, to provide robust evidence for management decisions. Marine Resources currently have a number of programmes running including stock assessments of key species, monitoring of cetaceans, assessment of benthic habitats, blue carbon assessment, eDNA study and various bespoke programmes (breem nests assessment, iVMS assessment, Portelet NTZ). These workstreams are delivered through a combination of in-house expertise, collaboration with other government organisations (e.g. IFCA), academic institutions, local fishermen and NGOs (e.g. Société Jersiaise).

Students also undertake project work with the Department. All of the projects form part of policy development and advice and recommendations for Ministers. Projects will be written up as internal reports and published on Gov.je as required. Where appropriate, projects will be published in various formats (scientific papers, book chapters, conference presentations).

7. Would these resources require additional funding?

Delivery of these projects do require resources. £128k of funding has been agreed for 2021 through the Climate Emergency Fund ('CEF'). A business case has also been submitted for 2021 for additional staff resources (two officers) to deliver the increasing marine resources portfolio. A longer-term bid will be submitted through the government plan process to retain these resources post 2021. Bids in subsequent years will also be submitted either through the CEF or Government Plan as and when required.

R17 - The Minister for the Environment should seek to ensure that, now and post-Brexit, suitable engagement and support is extended to the fishing industry, given the significant implications this will inevitably have for the industry.

8. Minister you accepted our recommendation. You noted in your response that you are seeking administrative, financial, and infrastructure support for fishing aquaculture and you believed that political responsibility for these resources should sit within your portfolio. Could you briefly, in your view, explain the rationale for this?

I have maintained my publicly stated position that we should support the fishing industry consistently since I have held the position of Minister for the Environment. I am also clear that currently industry support sits within the portfolio of the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture. This remit is wide covering all sectors of our economy. Whilst the rural industries are a relatively small part of the economy in numbers, they are environmentally, historically, and culturally huge, as well as being an integral part of Island life. Given the interconnectivities between these industries and the environment, it is my view that support would sit well in the Minister for the Environment's remit. However, regardless of Ministerial responsibility, it is imperative that Government works across all Departments to deliver the support that is required by industry.

9. Can you elaborate on why there is continuing delay to resolve the matter of financial and administrative support for the fishing industry especially given the implications of Brexit would largely have been known about for some time beforehand?

The general outcome of the Brexit negotiations was known but the details of the TCA remained unknown until the very last moment, together with any understanding of how the Agreement would be interpreted on the ground. I, together with the Minister for External Relations; my Assistant Minister; and Officers from both Departments, have worked extremely hard to provide the support needed in what is a constantly evolving situation. I fully accept that the changes for the fishing industry under the TCA are complicated and represent a very different way of working for

businesses that increases the administrative burden and, no doubt logistics and cost, but this is not a function of poor planning, rather circumstance. I acknowledge there is more to do, and I will work with ministerial colleagues, officers, and industry to get the systems needed and support required in place and working as best we can as soon as possible.

10. Minister, how do you intend to engage with and support the fishing industry going forward?

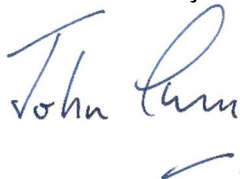
I believe I have a good working relationship with industry and engage with them often. Officers have been, and will continue to be, in daily contact with fishermen, exporters, and fish farmers, to understand, discuss, develop solutions as required for industry. Communications can be difficult in the fast-changing situation we are in and I accept that sometimes those communications could be improved, and I will continue to work to make it so.

11. Minister, considering it is your view that you should have political responsibility for these resources, how do you intend to apply that responsibly to support the industry?

As I have said, it is the responsibility of the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture to deliver industry support per se., and I will provide whatever assistance I can to facilitate that. I, and my Department, are available to assist the industry as needed in this post-Brexit world. I believe, in part, that ensuring that the right Departmental resources are in place to provide the science, administration, policy and compliance regime that supports the industry is also key and I shall be continuing to press for those. I am grateful that Scrutiny have also supported me in this and, I hope, will feel able to continue to do so.

I do hope the above answers your queries and please do not hesitate to contact me if you require anything further.

Yours sincerely



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