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Chair, Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Panel
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Dear Deputy Luce,

Infrastructure–workstream updates and Ministerial priorities

Thank you for letter dated the 28th of July and for extending the deadline for a reply to Friday 26th August. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate you and your panel on your appointments and I too look forward to working with you over the next four years.

(i) Workstream updates

Sustainable Transport Roadmap

Workstream initiated and themes underdevelopment.

Work continues in line with the Sustainable Transport Policy¹ and the second interim update was published in December 2021². A review of the outputs of the four rapid analysis studies (Mobility as a Service, Parking Plan, Bus Development Plan and Active Travel Plan) is underway. My intention is to present these as A Sustainable Transport Roadmap as outlined in the Carbon Neutral Roadmap (Policy TR8). Given the breadth of my new brief it may be ambitious for me to achieve this in 2022 but my intention is to prioritise this by mid 2023.

Waste Strategy

Workstream initiated and themes underdevelopment.

The establish principles of the waste hierarchy, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Recover will continue to underpin our policy going forward but it is clear the waste strategy needs to be refined, updated, and strengthened following the adoption of the Carbon Neutral Road Map which commits us to making on-Island solid waste disposal net-zero by 2040.

To achieve this, a net-zero circular economy strategy will be developed by 2025. This work has commenced with SPPP policy officers working alongside specialist officers in IHE.

¹[Sustainable Transport Policy \(gov.je\)](#)

²[Second Interim Report on the Sustainable Transport Policy \(gov.je\)](#)

This work is based on circular economy principles, and will build on the existing waste management hierarchy, which recognises the need to reduce, reuse and recycle, before recovering energy and, ultimately, disposal. It will also consider the drivers of waste production in Jersey, and how the Island might interpret and adopt modern concepts of the circular economy. It will build on the recent Infrastructure Capacity Study and the Integrated Minerals, Waste and Water Study, developed as part of the evidence base for the draft Bridging Island Plan[1]; and support the effective implementation and enforcement of construction site waste management plans (draft Bridging Island Plan policy WER1).

Bus Development Plan and Bus Operator's Contract

Workstream initiated and themes underdevelopment.

Mass transit in the form of buses represents the Island's greatest opportunity for modal shift from private car use, a significant contributor to Jersey's carbon footprint as well as congestion. It is also recognised that beyond just transporting Islanders and visitors an efficient bus service supports our economy and provides an essential social service supporting our community's wellbeing.

The new 'Bus Operators Contract' will reflect the findings and recommendations of the emerging 'Bus Service Development Plan' which is a systematic, evidence led, whole-system analysis of the options, opportunities and challenges associated with making changes to:

- the optimum distribution, design and frequency of routes, including existing routes;
- infrastructure, including where improvements could make it quicker and more convenient to get the bus;
- the size and types of vehicles used e.g. smaller buses, wheeled trams etc;
- allocation of space, including for priority bus lanes, junctions and bus stops;
- the ticketing and fare structure, concessions and the government subsidy;
- the school bus network and service; and
- the long-term investment plan for the bus fleet, acknowledging the move to ultra-low emissions technologies.

The Plan, to be published at the end of the year, will be based on detailed quantitative modelling, and qualitative analysis, of where, when and why people do (and don't) want to travel.

The assessment of commercial options for delivery will be developed in accordance with government procurement best practice, to achieve best commercial and social value for our community.

Coastline algae management plan and clean-up progress

In operation with new themes underdevelopment.

Sea Lettuce has been increasingly affecting St Aubin's Bay since the 1970's from July to October each year, but it can also appear at Havre-des-Pas and further round the East coast. It grows in the water, not attached to rocks or sand, when the sea temperature reaches 14-15 degrees. It is reliant on shallow water without too much wave action and a

high level of nitrate nutrients in order to proliferate. The nitrate levels in our coastal waters are high, as are the levels in the water between the Island and the adjacent coast of France that makes up the 'Bay of St Malo'.

Whilst work continues to reduce agricultural use of fertilisers, and the new Sewage Treatment Works near completion it is unclear if these actions will prevent the annual 'tipping point' being reached whereby all the factors are in place that determine a 'good' or 'bad' season. Early season sea water temperature is believed to be a key factor and unfortunately 2022 was generally 1 degree above average.

IHE and its contractors work under the conditions laid down in F.E.P.A. licences issued under the Department of Environment (Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 (Jersey) which determine how, when, and where beach cleaning operations may take place. Sea Grass growth zones, which cover a large part of the intertidal area of St Aubin's Bay, are a protected marine species, and as such, protected from being driven over, or having weed deposits put on top of them.

IHE Operations & Transport, Municipal Services have conducted cleaning operations which are limited to approximately the first 50 metres of the top of the most popular parts of the beach. The beach cleaning budget has over the years been absorbed within the IHE Municipal Services – Highways Cleaning budget and is shared by demands for snow / ice / storm clearance as well as day to day work. Developments in collection and disposal methods in recent years have improved the Department's efficiency and effectiveness in collection and disposal, however they are more costly, and as a result the relevant budgets are usually overspent and supported by other areas of IHE Operations & Transport.

Collection & Disposal

Light deposits of brown seaweed (Vraic) and sometimes sea lettuce, on the tide line on priority amenity beaches (May – September):

- This is collected as part of the normal IHE summer beach cleaning operations using an IHE tractor-towed Surf Rake machine. This operation also de-litters the sand and leaves the beach looking at its best.
- The collected material is deposited into contractor's trucks and taken to the IHE La Collette - Green Waste site for partial composting and mixing with other products to make a soil improver landscaping product used mainly by landscaping contractors (approximately 800 – 1000 tonnes per season).
- Limited capacity at the Green Waste site prevents this being extended to heavy deposits of weed.

Heavier deposits of brown weed (Vraic):

- When causing a significant nuisance on priority beaches or determined to be posing a hazard to public health – these are collected from the beach soon after the top of spring tides by contractors working for IHE using heavy plant with ‘H’ frame attachments or backhoe loaders. As there is no land-based disposal option for such heavy deposits, this is taken down to the low water mark in trucks and tipped / spread in as low piles as possible, avoiding sea grass beds if present.

Light / Medium deposits of green sea lettuce:

- Collected by IHE’s second tractor-towed Surf Rake which has a modified collection hopper that releases some of the water out of the material, working as close to the tide line as possible. Then emptied into hook-lift skips placed on a nearby slipway, which again have drainage to allow some sea water to drain back to the beach. Once full the skips are removed by truck and taken to the IHE La Collette Green Waste site for composting. This disposal option is dependent on the Green Waste site having sufficient capacity.
- If unable to dispose of at the Green Waste site, the option for heavy sea lettuce deposits is followed.

Heavy deposits of green sea lettuce (current preferred option):

- Collected by both IHE Surf Rakes, working in parallel as close to the tide line as possible in order to reduce the contamination of the sea lettuce by sand and thereby minimising volume.
- Tipped into agricultural contractor’s tractor-towed ‘muck’ spreading machines parked on nearby slipways and taken directly to suitable and approved agricultural land for use as a ‘top-dressing’ fertiliser.

Very heavy deposits of green sea lettuce / last resort:

- These are collected from the beach soon after the top of spring tides by contractors working for IHE using heavy plant with ‘H’ frame attachments or backhoe loaders. As there is no land-based disposal option for such heavy deposits, this is taken down to the low water mark in trucks and tipped / spread in as low piles as possible, avoiding sea grass beds if present.

Potential Operational Developments

As sea lettuce mainly consists of salt water, which harms its use as a fertiliser, and is of no benefit to any process, the team would like to reduce the volume and weight of material collected by the removal of most of the water as early in the collection and disposal cycle as possible. This would open up a number of potential disposal opportunities including wider agricultural land fertiliser use and possible commercial raw material uses.

Trials have taken place using a small-scale prototype hydraulic press commissioned by the team which successfully proved the principle. At present capital funding would be required for a project to be instigated to take this further. This is currently on the IHE project funding wish list.

Vehicle testing delivery model

Workstream update.

Following an unsuccessful amendment to the Bridging Island Plan to rezone two fields to the south of the Airport officers from Driver & Vehicle Standards were instructed by the previous Minister for Infrastructure to re-evaluate all potential sites and if necessary, to broaden the number of sites in scope.

I have requested a briefing on all aspects of this matter from the officer leading this project. Once I have received this briefing, I will be pleased to update the panel at the earliest opportunity.

Property

In operation with new themes under development

The Property directorate will be supported and facilitated to act more widely across the Government of Jersey to ensure effective and efficient coordination of our property assets against the many and varied competing requirements acknowledging the growing maintenance costs of an ageing estate. This is both in the internal coordination and management of the allocation of sites for governmental use and the discharge of our functions but also the efficient allocation of sites for development or refurbishment to meet needs such as the requirement for affordable housing as well as the educational recreational and sports needs of a healthy population.

The condition of the estate needs to be accurately assessed in order that the maintenance regime can move away from being reactive to being proactive and there will be rationalisation opportunities linked to the new office project and the hospital project that will contribute to a more effective maintenance process

This work will be in partnership with the Future Places workstream, ministerial colleagues and arm's length bodies to input into a public land vision for the Island, St Helier and will including delivery of the public realm strategy.

(ii) Ministerial priorities for the next 12 months.

To meet the 16th action of the Council of Ministers' 100 Day Plan which states "All Ministers will finalise their plans for the coming year and present their plan to the States Assembly" I can confirm that I am on track to present to Assembly my plan by the deadline set of the 20th of October.

My Ministerial Plan will aim to deliver on the priorities set for me by the Chief Minister, which are as follows:

“In your own area during this term of office, you will lead key projects including the new government office scheme, the new Sewage Treatment Works, and a mental health facility, as well as projects such as the new skatepark. We also need to deliver improvements in the school estate, especially in town. This is a large programme of capital improvements, which we need to deliver in a timely fashion.

We are also of the same mind on the need to make better and more efficient use of the government’s property portfolio. You will expedite the release of government-owned property as part of a response to the housing crisis, demonstrating that this government utilises its assets rather than leaving them vacant.

This Government is also committed to the Carbon Neutral Roadmap agreed by the last States Assembly. You will accelerate the implementation of the sustainable transport policy to ensure we meet our carbon neutral goals.

You will also work closely with the Minister for Housing and Communities and the Minister for the Environment and Energy to make any appropriate structural changes to the Department of Infrastructure, Housing and Environment, supporting cost-effective solutions.

Critically, I would also like you to ensure that the existing Hospital Project is subjected to an immediate review to assess possibilities for delivering the hospital facilities in an appropriate, cost-effective way.

You will need to achieve all this whilst leading a department that manages and maintains our open spaces, gardens, and amenities; the Island’s transport, traffic, road systems; and the waste, sewerage, and recycling facilities. As demonstrated during your election as Minister, the Assembly and the public are very focused on these matters.”

Whilst I am confident, I can deliver on all these priorities I intend to focus first and foremost on reviewing the Our Hospital Project.

Once my Ministerial Plan is complete and I have the support of the Council of Ministers to deliver my plan I will be pleased to share my plan with the Panel in advance of presenting it to the Assembly.

(iii) Timetable of Anticipated Propositions up to March 2023

The Department for Infrastructure, Housing & Environment has set an ambitious business plan to deliver before year end. All the officers I have met with over the summer are working extremely hard to deliver on the objectives set within this plan. The officers are working on these objectives whilst managing the equally important and critical services we as islanders depend on every day. Furthermore, I am acutely aware of the additional demand placed on these officers by a significant number of vacancies in crucial roles across the Department including key senior engineering roles.

Whilst I intend to bring forward my own plans for the Department, I do not have a timetable of propositions to lodge between now and the end of 2022. This is because my focus at present is:

- the review of the Our Hospital Project,

- To support officers to deliver the 2022 Business Plan
- to set out my intentions for the remainder of this political term.

I look forward to our first meeting on 7th September where I hope I can share with you my intention for the way forward and to hear your views on how we can work together to achieve the best outcomes for islanders.

Yours sincerely

Tom Binet
Minister for Infrastructure

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