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Jersey | JE2 3RR

Deputy Steve Luce
Chair, Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel

BY EMAIL

22 November 2023

Dear Deputy Luce,

Proposed Government Plan 2024-2027 Scrutiny Review – Information Request Response

I write in response to your letter of the 15 November in which you pose questions in respect of growth bids. I have reproduced these below in the order asked and provided a response below each one:

Q1. In respect of the growth bids which did not have a business case commissioned, could you explain the rationale which was provided as to why each of these individual bids within your ministerial remit were rejected?

A1. It was considered, post drafting and submission, that bids could either be met by the Climate Emergency Fund, funded via in year reprioritisation or that the department (I&E) would have sufficient flex within its overall budget to meet prioritised needs.

Q2. In respect of the Biosecurity Team growth bid, please could you provide further details of the outcome of the business case that was commissioned and the reasons for not including this in the Proposed Government Plan 2024-27?

A2. This Government Plan Bid for £605,000 sought to deliver the draft Biosecurity Framework 2024 to 2027 and to support the upgrading of an existing but outdated environmental laboratory function at Howard Davis Farm which, due to post Brexit regulatory drivers, is seeing significantly increased workflow. This is mainly in the diagnoses of species arriving at the port in line with EU Official Control Regulation and EU Plant Health Regulations and where diagnoses are required to align with UK regulatory partners such as APHA and DEFRA. The lab also supports the States Vet, Marine Resources and Land Resource Management functions at Natural Environment.

The bid provided for vehicles, materials and equipment (including protective equipment) for a recently formed team of officers dealing with Invasive Non-Native Species (eg Oak Processionary Moth, Asian Hornet, Pine Processionary Moth, Pampas Grass, Hottentot Fig, purple Dew

Plant). In order to adequately provide this service, external training for existing staff was also costed into this bid. The rationale for not continuing with this bid was as per A1 above.

Q3. What is the impact of the decision not to include these growth bids for the various service areas within the Department and/or policy development? How satisfied are you with the current position?

A3. With sufficient time to adapt to the knowledge that funding is not forthcoming in this policy area, the department has tailored the outputs of workstreams associated with the anticipated funding accordingly. Modified upgrades to our laboratory facilities are now being funded through savings made in other areas over a longer period as will practical purchases such as training and vehicles. In terms of satisfaction, the release of funds as requested would have provided a different outcome which was at the time of drafting considered optimal. Our officers have now adapted their expectations and are delivering a more operationally focused piece of work which will work well for the department. It could have been even better, but I accept that not everything can be funded to the level we would ideally like.

Q4. Is it anticipated that any of these growth bids will be funded by alternative means? i. If so, how? ii. If not, will these be prioritised for inclusion in the next Government Plan?

A4. Yes, as above we are currently adapting budgets to make use of any underspends but it is recognised that these may not fully cover operational needs. In these cases, it may be necessary to include further government plan bids.

Q5. In respect of the Water Strategy growth bid: i. To what extent are you able to progress with policy development without further funding secured through this year's Government Plan approval process? ii. How does this impact on the timeline for delivering a new Water Strategy?

A5. Using existing funding, the department has been able to fund the scoping phase of work under the policy products procurement framework to inform the breadth and detail of this cross-departmental workstream. This is with a view to producing a business case to inform a future government plan bid to deliver a Water Strategy. The Water Strategy timeline as originally envisaged is likely to be delayed by a year.

Q6. In respect of the Jersey Met growth bid: i. What was the driver for this growth bid initially? ii. Could you provide further details on what added improvements further funding would make to current weather monitoring, warnings and active travel forecast?

A6. The driver for this bid was an improved offering from our Jersey Met Office and the bid covered four areas as below:

- Two automatic weather stations designed to specifically measure ground wetness. The £9k spend here would have been part of a wider I&E project to determine wetness in specific flood risk catchments and would support island resilience / understanding of how ground conditions contribute to catchment and downstream flooding.

- A review (£40k) to provide for updated weather warnings ensuring they are fit for purpose and modern requirements in the face of extremes of temperatures / rainfall.
- The standardisation of met data formatting and its input into data visualisation software. This £20k project provides for globally homogenised data which makes for better modelling and also, as a side benefit, improves the data feed from Guernsey giving a better and more accurate picture of its weather.
- The provision of an Active Travel Forecast (not something we currently provide) to encourage uptake of non-fossil fuel travel – approximate costs £15K which we will look to fund from alternative met budgets.

Q7. In respect of the water and air quality growth bid, please could you provide more information detailing how current funding is deemed sufficient without further growth investment?

A7. We are now assured that the funds requested through this bid (as they were to cover a shortfall in a previous Government Plan bid) are in place from 2025 onwards.

Q8. In terms of both the biodiversity and biosecurity growth bids, please could you provide more information detailing how current funding is deemed sufficient without further growth investment.

A8. The biosecurity bid is covered in point 3 above, and the biodiversity workstream can now be taken through the scoping phase with funds made available through this government plan process. This will seek to inform us of best value options in creating any new strategies, give a rough indication of costs and timescales over which they should apply, and will lead to further requests for funding as appropriate.

I hope the above is sufficient for your further review.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Renouf', with a horizontal line underneath it.

**Deputy Jonathan Renouf
Minister for the Environment**

