

GOVERNMENT PLAN 2020–2023: Scrutiny Response
FURTHER INFORMATION ON ADDITIONAL REVENUE EXPENDITURE AND CAPITAL AND MAJOR
PROJECTS EXPENDITURE

This is a small sum when salaries and equipment costs for field work for government teams are taken into consideration. However, given the economic climate and demands on States funds we need to ensure resources focus on projects that have the highest relevance and most significant potential success factors.

There possibly is a smoke screen strategy being employed which needs careful scrutiny. From my own knowledge of the current Marine Conservation government funded programs, I believe some proposals are of limited effect and therefore poor value. Much of the focus within Marine Resources is linked to the commercial fishing industry however legislation does not embrace recommendations.

Without tighter controls, commercial catches will continue to reduce stocks. Future proofing plans need to consider economic prediction models. Human populations predictions demonstrate that demand for fish is already exceeding supply. Jersey's territorial waters remain open to over exploitation.

From a wider perspective there is a disproportionate and inaccurate over emphasis on climate crisis rather than reducing Anthropocene drivers which remain the most dominant extinction factors. As a result, little will happen that will result in a significant impact.

Related Government departments favour projects that avoid controversy and appeal to armchair environmentalists resulting in minimal effect and limited success

Independent researchers and scientists need to be supported and listened to if we are to have any measure of success.

Report text response:

'Species and habitat protection £120,000 - To extend protection of species, habitats and specifically trees which are important carbon sinks'.

This statement does not reflect a balanced, informed decision that focuses on the most effective strategies-Key seabed habitats are substantially more efficient and effective Carbon sinks. The sea generates huge quantities of Oxygen. Although potentially a much more in-depth report was generated, in the summary the entire focus appears to be on trees. Our seagrass and species rich diverse habitats have a significantly greater ability to absorb CO2 and filter the water column.

'...to control the spread and establishment of a range of invasive and non-native species (INNS) including Asian hornets, sea squirts and Japanese knotweed etc'.

'Marine environment research £75,000 to carry out scientific research in the marine environment. This is an area of local and international focus on the 'blue economy'; 'blue carbon'; species protection; marine plastics; fisheries management and fisheries agreements (in particular during and beyond Brexit)..... respond to post-Brexit and any impacts on the Granville Bay Treaty, which should become clearer after 2019.

There are several concerns here:-

The Asian Hornet threat is serious but the fear factor has generated a great deal of public attention

while a number of invasive or environmentally damaging species grow exponentially without any attention or management strategy.

The Island has created its own 'Killing Fields' through planning decisions, limited control of farming, construction and land reclamation. This provides invasive species with an advantage over the Islands Endemic Faunal population. Practises continue, that favour alien colonization while reducing our own endemic species communities ability to maintain a stable population.

I am not sure exactly the full extent of what scientific research has taken place through Marine Resources but examining those that are in progress it appears that independent studies play a significant part but remain from a marine environment perspective poorly supported or acknowledged.

For nearly 10 years Marine Resources have conveniently kept the fact that it was Jersey Marine Conservations (JMC) surveys that resulted in the largest Marine Protected area being established and the ban on Mobile Gear in the sub-tidal area. To date any additions achieved by Marine Resources outside of commercial fishing are significantly smaller.

It was the JMC instigated report, that influenced the Granville Bay Committee to support significant reductions in Mobile Gear deployment.

Ministers considering and voting on these requests need to support and utilise independent investigations and reports to ensure expenditure is (cost) effective and results in significant environmental benefit.

Kevin Mcllwee
Chairman & Seasearch coordinator

Jersey Marine Conservation