



Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel

Government Plan 2021-24

Witness: The Minister for the Environment

Tuesday, 27th October 2020

Panel:

Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade (Chair)

Connétable J.E. Le Maistre of Grouville

Deputy K.F. Morel of St. Lawrence

Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier

Witnesses:

Deputy J.H. Young of St. Brelade, The Minister for the Environment

Deputy G.C. Guida of St. Lawrence, Assistant Minister for the Environment

Mr. A. Scate, Director General, Infrastructure, Housing and Environment

Mr. W. Peggie, Director, Natural Environment/Acting Group Director, Regulation

Mr. K. Pilley, Head of Place and Spatial Planning

Ms. F. Glover, Principal Sustainability and Foresight Officer

[14:32]

Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade (Chair):

The panel is myself, Mike Jackson, Constable of St. Brelade, as the Chair. We have Connétable Le Maistre of Grouville. We have Deputy Morel and Deputy Gardiner, I think. Over to you, Minister. You know who your team are.

The Minister for the Environment:

Okay. Well, I am not sure I can see them all but I will give it a go. Hi, it is John Young, Minister for the Environment; Gregory Guida, my Assistant Minister; Andy Scate, the D.G. (Director General) of the new renamed I.H.E. (Infrastructure, Housing and Environment) Department, if I have that right; Mr. William Peggie, but Willie Peggie well known as, who is Director of ... let us get this right. He is carrying 2 roles at the moment. He is Director of Environment and he is also Acting Director of Regulation, so doubling up. Let us have a look at the list. I think we a little bit fall short on officers because it is a holiday. Well, it is not holiday week, people have family duty and so on. We have Kevin Pilley on the Island Plan team. I think we have also got Fiona Glover. Fiona is obviously supporting the ... I have asked Fiona to come along because the sustainable transport stuff very much crosses over with the carbon neutrality, and Fiona kindly agreed to come along because she is handling that part of the work. I do not think I have missed anybody out; apologies, shout now if you do or put your hand up. If not, that is it.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Good, okay. I will go straight into questions, Minister, if I may. As lead Minister for the assessment of public infrastructure and resources project, could you update us on this, please? The 6-monthly report, R.89, gives a very short overview of the reason for the delay and how work is progressing on this. Would you be able to expand a bit further on what progress has been made and how much it is proposed this remit will change under the 3-year bridging Island Plan?

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes. Sorry, if you would not mind just clarifying the question. It does not coincide with my briefing notes. Are we talking about the funding for the Island Plan or are we talking about the funding for the regulatory project where we are doing new I.T. (information technology) systems? Could you please clarify?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

It is the assessment of public infrastructure and resources project.

The Minister for the Environment:

Oh, right. I think that is the ... sorry, some of these names that are assigned in our new corporate hierarchy confuse me. So, in the business case funding is requested and approved for £150,000, as you say. The work is still in train. The first 2 phases are informing the Island Plan review and further work will follow. It is anticipated that the full £150,000 will be required to complete the study to enable development of the Island infrastructure plan. So that progress is in place. Obviously, as Minister, I have been informed that the Island Plan needs to have a longer-term view of infrastructure because obviously just looking ahead at a 3-year period is not ideal. Nonetheless, some of the things will need to be addressed in that period, and I think that might be appropriate for that gap to

be filled on exactly where the progress of that infrastructure work is by either perhaps Kevin Pilley or Andy Scate. Could I do that, Chairman?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Of course, yes, please do.

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

I am happy to pick that up, Chairman, if that is okay. Yes, thank you, Chair. As the Minister said, we refer to this piece of work as the infrastructure capacity study and that is helping to inform the Island Plan review, which is ongoing at the moment. As the Minister said, we are working through 2 phases of that report. The first one was a sort of state of the nation report looking at the condition and capacity of much of the Island's infrastructure, and then the second phase was looking at future requirements of that infrastructure. We will use that for planning purposes to identify if there are any immediate requirements in the near term, as the Minister has indicated, and if so, they will be addressed in the bridging Island Plan. If there are longer-term implications, they will be acknowledged in the bridging plan but likely addressed in the subsequent Island Plan. The subsequent phase of the work itself I think is really to develop this something beyond simply a planning tool - when I say planning I mean planning in the strict sense of the word that us town and country planners might understand by the phrase - and turn it into a much broader planning tool across government to look at the Island's infrastructure requirements across the piece and start to develop a prioritisation and delivery plan as to how those key pieces of infrastructure that are required are progressed in the future. Just in terms of infrastructure, perhaps just to clarify, Chair, by using that term we use it to embrace all aspects of public infrastructure that the community might require. So that ranges from if I might call it the dirty end of infrastructure, all of the hard bits of kit that process things like waste and water provision, electricity generation, et cetera, down to things at the other end of the scale which might be regarded as more social aspects of infrastructure, so things like community facilities, sports facilities and things like that. So it is quite broad in its outlook. I hope that provides the additional detail you were looking for, Chair.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Indeed. Just in terms of the funding, there is no forecasted amount being requested in this year's plan or for future years. Does that mean that no further funding is required and the current £150,000 is sufficient to complete the project or is this just because it is being repurposed, if you like, to reflect short-term aims of a 3-year bridging plan?

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

As I say, Chair, I think the first 2 phases will serve the purposes of the Island Plan review and they can be delivered within the £150,000 envelope. I think the third phase of the work will need to be

scoped in more detail once the phase 2 requirements are known, but I think currently we would envisage that that could be funded within the £150,000 envelope and delivered in 2021.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Thank you. Minister, in relation to the climate emergency fund and the carbon neutral and sustainable transport plan policy development, can you confirm whether the agreed allocation for 2020 of £500,000 has been fully spent and, if not, perhaps could you advise what proportion has been spent?

The Minister for the Environment:

No, I think I will just talk about the way we tackled it. Obviously, there were component parts. I think you are referring to the part that relates to the expenditure, which was approved from that fund, separate from the sustainable transport policy, I think. I think this is the environment ... obviously, what we have sought to do is we have sought to progress with the citizens' assembly work now and we are ready. We have incurred some expenditure there, but there is no question that commitments are having to be made because we are proposing that the citizens' assembly will commence in the early spring, if not February. I think that is what we are planning to do next year. We now know, of course, that that is going to have to be progressed in a COVID-friendly way, as it were. We will not be able to do the approach, but nonetheless the organisation work has been done, the preliminary costs have been incurred, and we expect to have a chairman likely appointed through the Appointments Commission with the work of the Greffe. So these things are ongoing and obviously we are having to make commitments which will use that money up in the early part of 2021. So that money is effectively carried over. The Council of Ministers agreed that the balance ... so I cannot give exact figures of what has been spent to date, but it will be to deliver the objectives of the climate emergency. So we end up with a set of actions that come out of that process which will then follow through in the subsequent years.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

So, in terms of the spend, it is just trying to understand the rationale for the increase in the proposed allocation for 2021 from £300,000 to £500,000. Last year's Government Plan forecast £300,000 so we are trying to understand what the extra amount will cover.

The Minister for the Environment:

Right, well, you have me there because I do not have last year's plan to hand, but I think there may well be something else included in it, other than the climate change. I think there was some initial cost. Mr. Scate, are you able to help me? Unfortunately, we do not have Louise here; she is not available this week.

Director General, Infrastructure, Housing and Environment:

Sorry, John, I do not have that figure in front of me either.

The Minister for the Environment:

I wonder if Fiona Glover may be able to help.

Principal Sustainability and Foresight Officer:

Chair, do you want me just to jump in there? Some of the other money is for a post, which we have not been able to recruit for this year but we will be ... we have now successfully recruited to that post and that spend will be commencing in December, so that is obviously rather later than we were hoping for. There has been a knock-on effect of the delay, if you like, from COVID in terms of our ability to implement some of the policy work that we were hoping to do earlier in the year, so it moved forward. Because the way the fund works is that once the money is spent we draw it down and that is the way it is structured to operate.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Which is the post, Fiona? You describe a new post.

[14:45]

Principal Sustainability and Foresight Officer:

Yes, of course. The post is called senior policy officer for sustainable transport, and it is based in SP3.

The Minister for the Environment:

I know it is not my area, it is the Minister for Infrastructure. There is no question in my mind that gap has been present in our team and I am really hopeful that this will really accelerate progress in this area.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

So, Minister, with regard to 2020, and this may be for the Minister for Infrastructure, but there are funds approved of £1.55 million. Do you have knowledge of what of this has been spent?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, I cannot give you the exact figures but I do know there are a number of threads, what you might call work streams, I suppose. We have active travel, we have bus services, we have parking and mobility and movement strategies. Of course, those are the threads of work, but in the meantime I think the initial monies were ... there was an initial programme of works which I think

again Fiona would be able to talk you through, which will deal with the early chunk of money, the 1.3 I think, but of course the other lines of work, which obviously the transport planner will be working on because those were agreed by the States, will in fact take up the remaining funds because there is no question, in every States debate you have there is absolute urgency about these transport issues and without the resources then the plans will just be plans, they are bound to be delayed. Have I got it right, Fiona, that the initial chunk was on a short-term list of projects, I seem to remember?

Principal Sustainability and Foresight Officer:

That is correct, Minister, yes. The Assembly agreed what was called a Strong Start programme for 2020, which was an initial set of “no regrets” type actions that we were hoping to implement during this year. Clearly, that has been impacted in terms of delivery timelines, et cetera, but we as the Government of Jersey are making progress with that implementation programme. As part of the Strong Start programme there was identified the need for these 4 pieces of strategic work around, as the Minister said, bus service, parking, active travel and mobility as a service. Again, we have been unfortunately delayed in getting those pieces of analysis and work off the ground, but we have started to scope those and will be consulting widely on the scope and content of how we take those strategic projects forward. The aim for those projects is that they develop the detailed strategic plans for the next 10 years, action plans for the next 10 years, to meet the objectives of the vision for the S.T.P. (Sustainable Transport Policy). Does that help?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Yes, indeed.

The Minister for the Environment:

Can I also add, I think just to correct slightly what I said, I said I thought the balance of the fund would go on what Fiona has just described. Of course, there are some very significant items as a result of the environmental work, which is very strongly related to climate emergency, which has also been included within that item.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

So that would be included. We have the proposed funding request of £3.2 million for 2021, so would that encompass those initiatives or are there any other initiatives?

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, it is. I have to admit, because I did not put these papers together myself, it is not easy to track all that down from these documents. Of course, I have managed to do that, I think, myself as best I can, and I am sure Mr. Scate can get us out of it if we get lost. But the 3.2 is a composite figure, I

think, and it includes the elements of the sustainable transport work follow-up other than the 1.3, and it also includes ... I think in all we have £458,000 involved in biosecurity and a whole range of pieces of work which are necessary because they are a component part of that work. So that is included within the budget sums. Mr. Peggie is able to talk us through that, I think. I see the surprise there.

Director, Natural Environment/Acting Group Director, Regulation:

I can, no, I am very happy to do that. As we have alluded to I think in previous scrutiny hearings, we have scheduled in a soil health PhD. We also have scheduled in the recruitment of officers to strengthen our biosecurity offering, particularly in areas such as marine invader species, human and animal disease vectors, and Asian hornets. Really, we have to instigate something that was intended this year, which was the creation of an invasive species strategy. We had funds allocated to us last year which because of COVID we were not able to continue the work on, but that is now taking shape and will be pursued this year. But in addition to that and within the funding that the Minister is mentioning, we also then have habitat management marine research, which is proving increasingly more important, particularly from an invasive species perspective, and also funds to support the implementation of the new wildlife law. So that is that £458,000 broken down, as it were.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Thank you. The ...

Deputy K.F. Morel of St. Lawrence:

Sorry, if I may, Chair, I had asked for a question.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Sorry, yes, indeed. Please go ahead, Deputy Morel, yes.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

This will come as no surprise to Mr. Scate or Fiona Glover. I asked the question regarding the climate emergency fund and this biosecurity initiative, so to speak. Essentially, I am concerned that the climate emergency fund will be used for ordinary work that should be undertaken by the Environment Department, and one of the things that came up there was Japanese knotweed as an invasive species. Now, Japanese knotweed is not here as a result of anything to do with the changing climate, so I would like to understand, number 1, to ensure that you will not be spending any money from the climate emergency fund on dealing with Japanese knotweed as an invasive species, but also how will you ensure that funds from the climate emergency fund are only used to deal with work to do with the climate emergency and will not be used for other areas which should come out of other parts of the department's own spending?

The Minister for the Environment:

I think it is an excellent question and, of course, it was discussed at C.O.M. (Council of Ministers) during the development phase of the Government Plan. The advice given to the Council of Ministers is that the terms of reference that were agreed in the States last year for the climate emergency fund were sufficiently broad to include a number of environmental purposes which are, in the advice of the officers given, within that. So I was clear as Minister that we would work within the bounds of those terms of reference, but obviously I do not have them immediately to hand here and I think we could take place in a long conversation. I think your question is a good one, but the direction that I was given by the Council of Ministers was clearly that they saw the logic that these items should be included. Obviously, there is absolutely no shortage of things to do. I personally do not believe that you can divide up the challenges into nice little boxes and I think even form the funding boxes. Even though you have heard, I think, the degree in which all of these issues are interrelated, sustainable transport is infrastructure but it is also environmental, in the same way I think there are a number of areas within biosecurity, the changes in our planet are causing species to come into Jersey waters which are unknown, that potentially could bring pathogens and so on, and I am advised that we need to upgrade our efforts on biosecurity. That does not even address the need to be able to prepare ourselves post-Brexit where we absolutely know that the focus of attention on us will be on how well we deliver our obligations to deal with those things. I think in the past we have not had the resourcing in place and we need to do that. About Japanese knotweed, I am just going to pass on that. If any of my colleagues feel they want to comment on that, but I am no expert in that and unfortunately I would want to come back to the Deputy on that and to you, Chairman, because Louise Magris, who is masterminding this, as I notified your officer yesterday is not able to be here. That is a matter we will have to clear up later. Does anybody want to talk about ...

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

That is perfectly acceptable, Minister.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Very quickly, sorry, Minister, we are short on time, but what you are saying is - there is no need about the Japanese knotweed because the Minister has answered - that the climate emergency fund is going to be used for expenditure within the department that may have nothing to do with the climate?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, I could not accept that.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

You just said that it can be ...

The Minister for the Environment:

No, I did not, I said it is related to it. It is within the terms of reference.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Not necessarily to do with the climate crisis, though.

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, where do you draw the boundaries of it? It is a broad issue. The changes are happening throughout the natural world as a result of that. I do not know if any of my colleagues want to speak on this but I ...

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Minister, do you see it really as a top-up fund for the Environment Department's budget?

The Minister for the Environment:

The decisions made about where material was funded were made by the Council of Ministers. Personally, if you wanted my personal view, I would have preferred that not to be the case, but you have seen how modest ... in fact, there is hardly any extra funds going on mainstream revenue expenditure and I think investing in trying to respond our whole environment into this is an important subject. Chairman, I see my Assistant Minister wants to say something here.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

No, his hand is just in the air. I do not think he ... I will leave it there, thank you.

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, when he does that it means he has a view ... no, he is not. Okay, you know him better than I.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Minister, can I just ask you: in my view, if I can call it sidling money off from the climate emergency fund to mainstream expenditure requirements dilutes the importance of the climate emergency fund and I suspect will affect the willingness of States Members to agree to contribute to it. Would you not agree with that?

The Minister for the Environment:

No, I do not, absolutely not. I think that what you have seen in there is we are building that fund. It is a ring-fenced fund. It has a broad range of terms of reference. I have asked that that is a debate

I think will need to take place subsequent. At the moment I would not accept that. If that is an issue of importance to the panel, then obviously we are going to have to follow it up and investigate it in much greater depth. But, of course, personally I am going to say this. Look, in our new Council of Ministers there are many things that I do not feel quite comfortable about in the way that we now operate as a government, but in the area of the environment we are achieving much greater integration across government functions than we have ever done. The idea that we are forced into putting very strict boundaries and artificial boundaries in front in that way I do not buy into. I think we are talking about very modest sums of money which are hugely important and are going to make a big contribution to the way in which Jersey looks after the environment because frankly ...

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I would not disagree with that ...

The Minister for the Environment:

... Chairman, it has been neglected. It has been neglected for decades.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Nobody would disagree with you, Minister, but realistically if funds are approved and allocated by the States Assembly for specific purposes, surely that is what they must be for. If they are to be used for other purposes, that needs to be declared at the outset.

The Minister for the Environment:

It is what you mean by other purposes, Chairman.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Well, for purposes not for which they are specifically allocated at the time of the proposal. There is nothing wrong with being open and honest about that. I am going to just tip into revenue from road duty, which was specifically for the climate emergency fund. Clearly, that is going to be reduced to a certain extent by the effects of COVID. Is there any planning or mitigation in place for this in your projected figures for 2021 and particularly in case there should be any further potential impacts of reduced travel brought about by ongoing COVID circumstances?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, all the numbers have been adjusted because ... on the latest figures. So, my understanding is that the arrangements that are happening is that the transfers from the road fund tax, fuel tax, account takes place on a quarterly basis. So the system automatically ensures that only the exact amount, the right proportion of tax that the States agreed, is allocated in. Obviously, the forward projections are for forward years based on the numbers that were originally forecast but, of course,

the figures have been adjusted, I believe, on the basis of current experience. Again, I do not know if Fiona wants to address that, or Andy, but I have not done the figures myself. They are done by the Treasury.

[15:00]

Principal Sustainability and Foresight Officer:

Just to support that, Minister, yes, the information that we have seen is that, yes, of course, during the lockdown period there was a reduction in road traffic. That is according to the monitoring done by our colleagues in Infrastructure. However, what they are reporting is that the road traffic levels have more or less returned to their pre-COVID levels, apart from a bit of a decrease in the morning rush hour time. So while the fuel duty levels will have declined during that lockdown period, they will have returned to their more pre-COVID levels. Of course, it is very difficult looking ahead to know exactly what the future impact and the future patterns will look like in terms of how COVID impacts working from home, travel, leisure patterns, et cetera. So we are all monitoring the levels of traffic. We are looking at the numbers and our colleagues in Treasury are monitoring the financial impacts as well.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Thank you. Minister, one of our recommendations in last year's Government Plan referred to impact assessments and consultation with the commercial sector should be undertaken in respect of proposed fuel duty increases before January 2020. Can you update us on whether this work was carried out and what outcomes you arrived at? If I can just refresh your memory, there was significant feedback from the commercial sector regarding the effects fuel duty increases would have on their businesses.

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, no, I do not recall that during the preparation of this year's Government Plan there was any further consultation. The Council of Ministers decided to retain the original States decisions that were made, and they were carried over.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Do you feel that there ought to be consultation with the commercial sector where fuel usage is significant and has a contributory effect to inflation?

The Minister for the Environment:

I think there will certainly have to be consultation on the work that comes out of 2 work streams, both the citizens' assembly, which is going to have to look at clearly the impact because they are very

much going to be certainly looking at transport because transport is pretty well our number 1 source of carbon emissions, so their recommendations absolutely will have to go through stakeholder consultations. Then there is this group that used to be called the revenue group. I am not sure what they are called now under the new plan. I am not on it, but this was in other words looking at measures which would assist us in the post-2021 situation of revenue-raising measures to be able to, if you like, implement the recommendations coming out of the citizens' assembly before the States approve it. So I absolutely think that those processes will be enough to give the consultation. Obviously, although we have here a plan for several years, the reality is those figures are going to need to be revised again next year. I think that process will allow that consultation and/or revision if necessary, either upwards or downwards, whichever way.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Thank you. Moving on to countryside access, Minister, can you provide further clarity on what aspects of this project have been partially deferred?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, I think I am going to hand over to Mr. Peggie. My recollection was this was a small amount of additional funding which was included within last year's plan in order to look after the vast areas of land that the department has to manage. That work has obviously been affected, but it is vital work and needs to carry on. Mr. Peggie, please could you take that up for us?

Director, Natural Environment/Acting Group Director, Regulation:

Yes, thank you. I do not have the figures in front of me, but as I recall from last year's bid we retained somewhere in the region of £650,000 over 4 years. Interestingly, as part of our cost-saving measures over into this year's Government Plan, we have lost £40,000 from that to balance the revenue of Government. The Minister is right, we had huge problems implementing the work that was associated with year 1 of that programme. This is work that is intent on mitigating against the requirements of the 2016 Countryside Access Strategy, that we were to be approving and agreeing signage work, we were to be completing the construction of mapping for both single-use and joint-use pathways, extending pathways and countryside access, creating new and uprating, all of which has been significantly hit and shunted on, I would suggest, by a year. So the works that have not been undertaken over the last year are being rolled forward with the permission of the funding strategy, as it were, to make sure that it will eventually be carried out within the Government Plan process.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Thank you. That leads me on to the Jersey national park. While we understand the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture is the lead Minister for the national park project,

we would nonetheless like to hear your views. There is very little description in the progress update contained within the 6-monthly progress report.

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, I think we have covered this a number of times on our other quarterly hearings and I am quite happy to do so. As I personally see the work we have been doing in the countryside is first of all updating the Island Plan in both the boundaries of our planning zones, and it is the planning zones that I think are really important, identifying where the special areas are and the planning policies that we need to have, but of course as well as that we have a separate pot of funding which the Minister for Economic Development was keen to have leadership of. There should also be funds available to promote the use of that land or those areas for recreation and enjoyment and leisure and, indeed, for economic exploitation purposes. So I am content that we certainly work jointly, and the officers do. We fully co-operate with that group and provide advice and guidance, but am I in the lead in terms of how that money is spent? No. My own preference is to spend money on conserving that area, so I cannot give you an update on how another ministry is allocating that. I do not know if any of my officers are a little bit more aware. I have supported those initiatives, I am not against them, but I think they are very much, if you like, ancillary to our prime role, which is conserving and looking after those areas.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Do you think that the funding of £150,000 proposed for 2021 is sufficient to meet the project's intended aims and what might that cover? Are you aware of that?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, I do not know. I do know that there was I think the gestation of that original sum, which was put into last year's plan, and I do not know whether any of it has been spent. I do hear that the building to Frances Le Sueur Centre has been allocated to the team. I understand that there is a proposal to spend some money doing improvements on it. I think there is a planning application potentially in the wings and I have read about their ideas. I think that is good because previously they were formed by the Minister for the Environment minus 2, I think. They were asked to do a job and they were asked to do a job with no funds, which I thought was a pretty poor do. I think eventually as part of last year's Government Plan some money was enabled, not a great sum, but I think when I listened to the team from the countryside national park - that is Mr. Stentiford and Mr. Hopley - with that start it was good to make a start and they could formulate their plans and obviously keep that under review.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Do you meet them regularly?

The Minister for the Environment:

When they ask to about advice and guidance, absolutely, of course we do, and they will be consulted as part of ... I think here my Assistant Minister is going to tell us his wisdom on this.

Assistant Minister for the Environment:

Just that I have seen them about 3 days ago, just at the end of last week, so I have had a complete update on what they have been doing and, most importantly, their work on the Frances Le Sueur Centre. So it is something that we will probably help them with because the other occupants of the centre, Trees for Life, are looking for another place to go and occupy. That is a planning issue, so we are trying to move the pieces around so that the park can use the Frances Le Sueur Centre exclusively.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Thank you. The Island Plan review, Minister, we are aware of the reasons for the delay in this project, but so that we can understand how the finances are being apportioned, could you clarify whether the £650,000 that was approved in the 2020 Government Plan will be required in full for expenditure relating to the 3-year bridging Island Plan or will a proportion of this amount be ring-fenced and moved on to the 10-year plan?

The Minister for the Environment:

No, I am absolutely certain that the funds that we have allocated will be required. I think what will be ... so any notion that somehow or other what we are producing is a cut-down plan, it is not a full plan, that is not correct. The foundations of the plan require a huge amount of building up of evidence. I think a lot of that evidence is going to last beyond the boundaries of the 3-year transitional plan and is going to mean that those pieces of work will not need to be repeated in any subsequent Island Plan. So I really feel very confident that that will be the case. So, yes, there will be some costs as a result of having to do an update or a follow-on for the remaining 10 years, but I think that can be contributed very much to the COVID. So I could give you a bit more detail, Chairman, but we do not have a lot of time. If you want a little bit more, Mr. Pilley could list all the various evidence areas, and we have had to spend that money.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

That is fair enough. We will develop that question line further as time goes on. I am going to just look at net revenue projects for 2021, if I may. The business case states that funding will be used towards additional policy development and legislation, science delivery, data acquisition and analysis, licensing, both fishing and export requirements and compliance at sea and onshore. Could

you break down exactly how the 2021 requested funding of £250,000 will be apportioned to these areas?

The Minister for the Environment:

I am struggling to pin down which item of the project. At the moment, there is work for marine and there is work for natural water. Are we talking about the natural water?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Well, 2021 is £250,000 and then the subsequent 3 years £92,000 each year.

Director, Natural Environment/Acting Group Director, Regulation:

This is marine-related work, Minister. I am very happy to intervene if you would like me to.

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, please. Obviously, I know what those projects are but how they are represented in the papers is not my strength because I did not do them.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Perhaps Willie could answer as well why the projected funding level drops from £250,000 in 2021 to £92,000 in future years.

Director, Natural Environment/Acting Group Director, Regulation:

Certainly. Well, perhaps I could attack that last part of the question first. That £92,000 is allocated towards the recruitment and retention of 2 fisheries officers, who are both currently employed with us but have historically been employed under reserved funding from Brexit-related Treasury funds. As you can hopefully well imagine, the need will continue for those officers, particularly after the end of the transition period when Brexit-related work becomes just mainstream-related work. So there is a requirement for those officers to continue their work. That is the £98,000 and, of course, that constitutes a portion of the £250,000. The remainder then is made up of the purchase and installation of V.M.S./i.V.M.S. (vessel monitoring systems/inshore vessel monitoring systems) on our fishing fleet vessels. After the end of the transition period it is going to be a requirement that all vessels over a certain length are going to need to have V.M.S./i.V.M.S. on board in order to comply with externally driven regulation.

[15:15]

We felt at the moment that it is not something, given the parlous state of industry, that they could be expected to fund themselves, although that is not necessarily the case in the future. But that

£127,000 essentially represents 127 boats times £1,000 worth of cost of an i.V.M.S. system. In order to support that system, though, we need £15,000 of I.T., as it were, sitting behind the scenes. That is essentially systems that link in that i.V.M.S. with us and then with any further authorities. The further remainder then is a logbook app, which is £15,000. One of the issues at the moment is that fishermen bringing the catch on to shore declare their catch via a paper format, which does not necessarily accord with the requirements of our reporting structures into the U.K. (United Kingdom) nowadays. So we are intent on using an app designed by D.E.F.R.A. (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) but the installation of that and the modifications of our Jersey one in order to fix the needs of that D.E.F.R.A. one will cost £15,000. So that is essentially the breakdown, Chair, of that £250,000.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Thank you very much. What consideration has been given, if any, to partnering with suitable third sector organisations, particularly in relation to marine research and/or data acquisitions, to inform your policy development? Have you explored this in any way?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, very much so. We obviously work with partners. There is no question about it. We have all sorts of liaisons, university work, we have excellent academic work and a very, very strong communication going on between the sources of expert excellence somewhere else. If you want the details, again I am going to have to refer to Mr. Peggie and probably Gregory, but there is no question, yes, of course we do that.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I am quite happy with the high-level answer. Are government grants available for marine research? Do you have any knowledge of that?

The Minister for the Environment:

Where from? What Government? We have to fund our research.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Yes, from your budget, in other words?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, absolutely and, of course, as you know, I went to the British-Irish Council 2 years ago and colleagues round the table from every jurisdiction of the British Isles agreed that we have to do much more in terms of marine science. There is absolutely no doubt about that, with the need for sustainable fisheries. Not that we needed the extra emphasis, but the Brexit situation has brought

into acute focus how we need to understand our fish populations and the environment within our marine waters more to be able to manage and conserve those stocks properly. So that does not come for free. It requires a lot of investment and I am very pleased we have this.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Have any bursaries ever been considered for some areas of this work to be conducted by masters or PhD students?

The Minister for the Environment:

Mr. Peggie I think is nodding.

Director, Natural Environment/Acting Group Director, Regulation:

Yes. We have not funded ... well, we have part-funded a PhD recently alongside Blue Marine Foundation looking at the habitat sampling, a grab sampling, and we are doing general work across the piece. We are trying to internalise research as well at the moment, though. It is something that if we are going to be developing a department of natural environment which has the intention of essentially supporting the creation of government policy and legislation but also following however we split from the U.K., we are going to have to up our ante when it comes to scientific research. I am just looking at a list in front of me now, which I will not reel off because you and your panel might not be all that interested in the specifics, but we have 10 independent research projects on the go that will be funded by our Government Plan funding this year. That is partially internalised but partially working in partnership with external players.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Thank you. Water. The business case for the new natural environment water project or the new revenue project does not provide much in the way of information. It says funding will be used to support research, resources investigation and action to protect our water resources, and then management for sustained benefit of current and future generations. Could you expand in more detail as to how the funding will be apportioned and utilised?

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, I agree, Chairman, it is a little bit summarised in there. But anyway, there are a number of components of that. First of all, there is £150,000 will be spent in 2021 and 2022 to get an understanding of the hydrology of P.F.A.S. (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances). Obviously, that means that we have to undertake hydrological study to quantify the distribution of P.F.A.S. in St. Ouen's Bay and the Pont Marquet catchments. That, of course, is the priority there because of the Island's water needs in the future. Therefore, what we are concerned about is the risk of contaminating so those areas cannot be used for public supply. Obviously, the international

standards for P.F.A.S. are constantly reducing, and so that puts private water supplies potentially at clarity. So, again, the bid does not include land mediation but it is in order to do the better understanding. It is about hydrological work. I can remember once upon a time the States used to have its own hydrologist but, of course, several years ago the States did away with that to save money, a very foolish thing as far as I was concerned because we have learned much more that we have so many issues to do with water. Then there is another £100,000 will be spent in 2022 in assessing the quality of controlled waters. This is about our marine waters, green seaweed, surface and ground waters, monitoring high nitrates, phosphate and current and historic pesticide levels. Then there is £150,000 will be spent on research and assessment in monitoring pesticides in the Island stream and this is work that we have agreed to do for a long time but have not been able to fund it. It was agreed with the farmers and the farming sector through the Action for Cleaner Water group. Then, finally, £80,000 on the recruitment of agricultural catchment areas to engage with landowners and farmers. Again, speaking to Deputy Luce and Jersey Water, that was an action that was agreed by Government in 2016 and never happened due to the lack of funding, so I am delighted to say that those plans and the funding there will really enable us to do much better in terms of dealing with this priority water resource. I hope I have that all right. I shall be corrected.

Director, Natural Environment/Acting Group Director, Regulation:

If you would not mind, Minister, I am very sorry, you said agricultural catchment areas there, which is just about right but it is an agricultural catchment officer, which I think might chime with a bit more resonance there. We are buying in a body, essentially, to liaise with the agricultural industry to try to make sure that the best techniques are taken up. Sorry, Minister.

The Minister for the Environment:

That is okay, thank you for a slip of the tongue and, of course, it reminds me that the principal tool there, we did introduce water catchment orders. So the whole idea is there was not much point in having new ministerial orders about water catchment rules, if you like, if we did not have anybody to implement them. This is one that has been done with the agreement of the farmers.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Thank you, Minister. Moving on to fisheries, the refit and replacement of the fisheries protection vessel and other vessels, no funding approval is requested for 2021 but an indicative figure is provided of £2,800 in 2023. Can you confirm what has been spent to date from the £580,000 agreed in last year's Government Plan?

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes. In principle, obviously the advice I have been given is we have to keep that vessel up to date with proper standards for operations, with marine safety standards and so on. My understanding is

there has been some refitting work recently. Ultimately, though, there is a plan to replace the vessel and I think, frankly, the whole direction of travel with the ways of going with Brexit and our separation from Europe indicates we are going to have to invest a lot more in our own regulatory capability and equipping ourselves better for that is important. Could I again ask Mr. Peggie to fill in the details, please?

Director, Natural Environment/Acting Group Director, Regulation:

Certainly, thank you. Yes, we have raised a purchase order so far to the tune of £177,600 and paid that, just to answer your question, Chair. We also have to pay a balance on that refurb work on completion of the same amount, so that is £177,600. Also, recognising what the Minister is saying in terms of uprating of our assets, the R.I.B.s (rigid inflatable boats) that we have been using commercially reached the end of their usable safe life and so we are required to uprate that to a new R.I.B., which was another £83,000 all told. So that is the spend thus far.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

When is the Norman Le Brocq due back?

Director, Natural Environment/Acting Group Director, Regulation:

Well, at the end of this year, before Christmas or around Christmas.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Thank you. There is no intention to purchase a warship to defend our fishing fleet, I take it, Minister?

[Laughter]

The Minister for the Environment:

I should not laugh, sorry, I beg your pardon, Chairman.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Moving on to Island public realm, including St. Helier, we are aware this falls under the Minister for Infrastructure as lead Minister but we would nevertheless like to hear your views. What impact will the proposed spend reductions have on the aims of the projects and what can be achieved or delivered in your view? Is £1 million sufficient to make a meaningful improvement to the Island public realm?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, I am going to put my hands up here, I really do not know about the Minister's budget reduction there. What I have been concentrating on is that we have to find money for our public realm. The investment needs to be increased. There are 2 particular projects that I am wanting to bring forward.

One is enhanced planning obligations, and I think it is an open secret in the Island Plan submissions - I have made it plain - that we are definitely looking for some mechanism to capture a proportion of the increase in land values as a result of development consents to be going into that fund. Now, I think Mr. Scate is probably better placed because as D.G. he is aware of all those budgets, and he can perhaps help me out with that question and I will come back if I need to.

Director General, Infrastructure, Housing and Environment:

Yes, the public realm lines in the capital programme have been reduced to currently £1 million per annum, which is a large reduction in those programmes mainly due to reprioritisation against other lines in our capital programme which are considered at this point in time more important. That is not saying that public realm is not important, it is just a prioritisation exercise as to where the money needs to be focused on other assets or other projects. I think what the Minister for the Environment has rightly said is that there does need to be a consideration on the infrastructure levy potentially again and how wide a development that uplift can fund improvements around development sites. I think that is an answer moving forward. I also think it is something that benefits all development sites in any case. It adds to value of those sites and it increases the value of our built environment.

The Minister for the Environment:

I wonder, Chairman, if I can make what you might see as a bit of a political point. I have said that we are doing much better as a Government joining up things across, but there is still work to do. I think particularly with the Island Plan coming forward it is really important - and I cannot overstate this, how important it is - that our future Government Plans do provide a proper framework of resourcing to ensure that the vision and work that is produced in the urban area and making St. Helier and the St. Helier town as good a place to live and work as we can and cope with an extra-large, really increased population, we need to have those funds. So that is where I am looking in future Government Plans. I am disappointed, frankly, to hear that that has been cut back. I am. That is my reaction. I am hopeful and I will do my best to ensure that in future plans people take notice of what is coming out of the Island Plan and we can achieve a greater level of integration. We have made good progress on integration but we need to do more.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Thank you, Minister. In terms of departmental budgets and efficiencies, as they are called, we note that there are no efficiency measures solely assigned to your department. Why is that?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, I think I have written separately there is a Scrutiny Panel, another panel - I am not quite sure who is chairing it - and we have had a whole series of questioning about that. I have written to them, probably about a 3 or 4-page letter. I think generally the roles that I am responsible for have

historically suffered from massive, I believe, underfunding. In fact, what has happened is resources were taken from them, I understand at least about a third over the previous Council of Ministers.

[15:30]

What I have sought to do is to try and achieve some redress of that, and I think with some success. But, of course, the functions that I have that responsibility for sit within a framework, a bigger one. They do not have their own budget. They sit within the I.H.E. budget, so I am completely dependent on that. Now, our starting point is negative because, for example, the decision not to approve the residential dwellings legislation resulted in a hole of £800,000 a year before we even start. So Mr. Scate has come up with a different strategy, a high-level one, which has gone forward to that other Scrutiny Panel - and I do not know whether you have had the exchange here - which I personally think is the right one. But any talk about cutting staff in these areas, for example, of regulation and environment now would just be completely the wrong thing to do. Mr. Scate is driving efficiencies out. For example, I have answered many questions about enforcement and planning enforcement. Mr. Scate is unlocking efficiencies to get an extra member of staff from within resources there, so that is an example of the sort of thing that Mr. Scate has been able to do. But as far as cutting staff, I am sorry, it is not something that ... I suppose the other line is to argue for increased planning charges, but they are high enough anyway. Mr. Scate, please, sorry.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

We are short of time, Minister. Can I just ask if there are any efficiencies that you are aware of as a result of the removal of economy from G.H.E. (Growth, Housing and Environment) in its transition to I.H.E.?

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, the budget went down. The budget has gone down, quite a big chunk of money. I have absolutely no say. The accounting officer of G.H.E., which I think is Mr. Littlewood, does that and the budgets were adjusted. I have always had to take a share, but I think everybody understood that that had to be a very modest share because of the inadequacies of funding that you look for the environment. If you look in the Government Plan, the figure is so low it almost does not count in terms of ordinary revenue expenditure.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I think the panel tends to agree with you, Minister. Minister, we have run out of time.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Sorry, Chair, I had another question in the chat.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Do, Deputy Morel, quickly, please.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Thank you. Sorry, of course. Minister, it was just about that regulation issue. I am still uncomfortable with the fact that regulation sits within your remit because I believe it should be outside of the I.H.E. Department full stop. It should be independent from I.H.E. So I do not believe there is anything in the Government Plan about that but we have heard talk about ... I forget what the phrase was but making regulations stand alone. What is happening in that area?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, it is an issue still for me. I am equally concerned about it. Mostly it does not present practical problems but from time to time it does, where Mr. Scate finds himself as in a different role. Of course, at the moment where we have not got a director of regulation separate because we have multitasking of roles in an acting situation, that is not ideal. Where I think the Council of Ministers last stood on this, we were advised that this needed to be addressed, this question of independence of the regulatory functions, and that there were a number of options to look at that. One was to externalise it. Now, that work has not progressed and I am concerned about that. I can tell you now I have written to the Attorney General and I have asked for a meeting about this because it is not something that I am prepared to lay unresolved in my timescale in office as Minister. At the moment, I am ... I do not know whether I want to go further. My preference I think at the moment is a greater level of separation but that would be prejudging. I do not know if Mr. Scate wants to come in.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Sorry, Minister, just quickly in terms of money, was there budget for it last year, for this piece of work, in your budget or was it in another budget? If it was there and it has not progressed what has happened to ...

The Minister for the Environment:

I think it would sit within the budget under what I call the SP3 team, being led by Mr. Walker, the Director General, I think, of that work. That I think sits under the Chief Minister, unless I am mistaken. But it has not progressed. I do think Mr. Scate needs to be allowed to comment on that, please, whether I have it right.

Director General, Infrastructure, Housing and Environment:

Just quickly, just to confirm what the Minister said there, the piece of work was ongoing in SP3 pre-COVID and obviously we have had SP3 personnel put on to other work. So that is a piece of work

that we are expecting to catch up with itself. It probably will not be until early next year, I would imagine, but there is certainly something in our thinking within the department that this is still an unresolved question as to what else is in regulation. I think there is a question of that and then there is a second question about where it sits within government.

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes. Just to illustrate, I recently agreed to take on the ... when I say I, as Minister I agreed to take on responsibility for the work under, if you like, the social care regulation, which frankly was not certainly within my expectation but I agreed to do it because somebody has to do it to achieve the separation. So, I think if the way we are going is that we are ending up with very much an aggregate regulatory function, that needs to be factored into the work that Mr. Scate has just mentioned. It is something that I am not comfortable with the current situation, as you know. I have never kept any secret about that and it is something that I will do my best to bring to the attention. You will subsequently make it so as well, I am sure.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Thank you.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Thank you, Minister. Thank you and your team for presenting to us this afternoon and answering our questions. We will no doubt meet in due course, so thank you to you all. I close the meeting.

The Minister for the Environment:

Thank you very much.

[15:36]