TYNWALD COURT
OFFICIAL REPORT

RECORTYS OIKOIL
QUAIYL TINVAAL

PROCEEDINGS

DAALTYN

HANSARD

Douglas, Tuesday, 19th July 2022

All published Official Reports can be found on the Tynwald website:

www.tynwald.org.im/business/hansard

Supplementary material provided subsequent to a sitting is also published to the website as a Hansard Appendix. Reports, maps and other documents referred to in the course of debates may be consulted on application to the Clerk of Tynwald's Office.

Volume 139, No. 16

ISSN 1742-2256

Published by the Office of the Clerk of Tynwald, Legislative Buildings,
Finch Road, Douglas, Isle of Man, IM1 3PW. *© High Court of Tynwald, 2022*

Present:

The President of Tynwald (Hon. L D Skelly)

In the Council:
The Lord Bishop of Sodor and Man (The Rt Rev. P A Eagles),
The Solicitor General (Mr W H Wannenburgh),
Miss T M August-Hanson, Mr P H Craine, Mr P Greenhill, Mr R W Henderson,
Mrs D Kelsey, Mrs M M Maska, Mr R J Mercer, Mrs K Sharpe
with Ms J Corkish, Deputy Clerk of Tynwald.

In the Keys:
The Speaker (Hon. J P Watterson) (Rushen);
The Chief Minister (Hon. A L Cannan) (Ayre and Michael);
Mr J R Moorhouse and Mr T S Glover (Arbory, Castletown and Malew);
Mr T D Johnston (Ayre and Michael);
Mrs C A Corlett and Hon. C C Thomas (Douglas Central);
Ms J L Faragher and Hon. C L Barber (Douglas East);
Mr D J Ashford MBE and Mr J C Wannenburgh (Douglas North);
Mrs S L Maltby and Mrs C S B Christian (Douglas South);
Mrs D H P Caine and Mr A J Smith (Garff);
Hon. K A Lord-Brennan and Mr T M Crookall (Glenfaba and Peel);
Hon. J P Poole-Wilson and Mr S G Peters (Middle);
Mr R E Callister and Hon. J M Edge (Onchan);
Hon. L L Hooper and Hon. A J Allinson (Ramsey);
Dr M E K Haywood (Rushen)
with Mr J D C King, Clerk of Tynwald.

Business transacted

Welcome to Mr Stephen Wooler CB 1123
Congratulations to Atlas Isle of Man 1123
Leave of absence granted 1124
Procedural – Order of business 1124
Bills for Signature 1124
1. Papers laid before the Court 1124
Questions 1128
1. Endemic approach to COVID – Whether conditions for supporting are met 1128
2. Climate Change Plan 2022-27 – Absence from Register of Business and July Order Paper 1130
3. Maternity and child support payments – Review pre-2023 Budget 1131
4. Flood Re Scheme – Progress extending to Island since March 2021 1133
5. Laxey Glen Mills Ltd – Continuing Treasury support 1135
6. Additional Educational Needs Code – Progress implementing 1136
7. Swimming pool review – Appointment of off-Island consultants 1138
8. School uniforms – Policy importance and cost impact 1141
9. Laxey Wheel restoration – Progress 1143
10. Green Living Grant Scheme assessment software – Fossil-fuel boiler removal and replacement support 1146
11. DfE engagement with businesses – Access to and use of cash 1147
12. Flour production – Securing on Island 1150
13. Respite facilities – Plans to upgrade and expand 1151
14. Doctors and nurses at Noble's Hospital – Number of full-time equivalents; expected establishment level; planned improvements 1155
15. Noble's Hospital staffing levels – Occasions Nursing and Midwifery Council levels not met; plans to improve 1157
16. Landlord Registration (Private Housing) Act 2021 – Implementation progress 1159
17. Airport closure on 16th June 2022 – Statement 1161
18. Bus Vannin minibus services – Policy on provision 1163
19. Free school meal recipients – Support during the summer holidays 1164
20. COVID-19 surveillance reports – How much longer to be produced; positive results and case numbers; current guidance 1172
21. Community infrastructure levy – Progress 1174
22. Asset value retainable when receiving financial support – Reassessment prior to 2023 Budget 1175

23. Leaving engines running unnecessarily – Progress in policy for schools and where young people gather 1176

24. Laptops and iPads in schools – Sufficient numbers; provision and renewal policy 1178

25. West Atlantic Aviation Maintenance – Job losses 1181

Procedural – Questions to be completed after Order Paper is completed 1183

The Court adjourned at 1.06 p.m and resumed its sitting at 2.30 p.m. 1183

Announcement of Royal Assent – Income Tax Act 2022 1184

Order of the Day 1184

3. Economic Strategy – Statement by the Chief Minister 1184

4. Offshore Energy Strategy – Statement by the Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture – Statement not made 1199

5. Climate Change – Statement by the Chief Minister 1200

6. Review of the harms caused by illicit drugs – Statement by the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs 1205

7. The Built Environment Reform Programme – Statement by the Chief Minister 1207

25. Local Government Act 1985 – Chester Street and Drumgold Street (Off-Street Car Park) (Revocation) Byelaws 2022 approved 1211

35. Harbours Act 2010 – Harbour (Dues and Charges) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations 2022 approved 1212

36.-37. Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2011 – Shared Equity Purchase Assistance (First Home Fixed) (Amendment) Scheme 2022 approved; Shared Equity Purchase Assistance (First Home Choice) (Amendment) Scheme 2022 approved 1213

38.-40. Local Government Act 1985 – Western Swimming Pool Board (Amendment) Order 2022 approved; Northern Swimming Pool Board (Amendment) Order 2022 approved; Southern Swimming Pool Board (Amendment) (No.2) Order 2022 approved 1215

8. Manx Utilities Authority – Additional expenditure for Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy – Phase 2 – Debate commenced 1220

The Court adjourned at 5.31 p.m. and resumed its sitting at 6 p.m. 1231

Manx Utilities Authority – Additional expenditure for Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy - Phase 2 – Debate continued – Motion carried 1231

9. Pre-School Credit Scheme – General Revenue expenditure application for £325,940 – Motion carried 1245

52. Financial Provisions and Currency Act 2011 – Pre-School Credit Scheme 2022 approved 1245

10. Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture Plan 2022 – Plan received 1247

11. Anti-Bribery and Corruption Strategy 2022-2027 – Report received 1260

The Court adjourned at 8 p.m. 1262

Tynwald

The Court met at 10.30 a.m.

[MR PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

The Deputy Clerk: Hon. Members, please rise for the President of Tynwald.

The President: Moghrey mie, Olteynyn Onnoroil.

Members: Moghrey mie, Mr President.

The President: The Lord Bishop will lead us in prayer.

PRAYERS
The Lord Bishop

Welcome to Mr Stephen Wooler CB

The President: Please be seated. Hon. Members. It is going to be quite a warm one today so feel free to take off your jackets and also loosen your ties and lose them at the point you cannot bear it any more.

Hon. Members, I would like to welcome to the Court Mr Stephen Wooler CB, who has been commissioned by the Council of Ministers to conduct a review of the role of the Attorney General. This review follows on from a debate in this Court last July.

Welcome, sir.

Members: Hear, hear.

Congratulations to Atlas Isle of Man

The President: Hon. Members, I hope you will join me in congratulating Atlas Isle of Man for their outstanding performance at the 2022 Junior Achievement Company final in Estonia.

Our young entrepreneurs represented the Isle of Man on the European stage and won more awards than any other nation. They won the Bata Group Award for Group Good Governance, in line with the UN's sustainable goals, they won the Environmental Sustainability Award and the City of Tallinn Excellence in Sales Award. Quite an achievement.

Jeant dy-mie, well done, Atlas Isle of Man.

Members: hear, hear.

Leave of absence granted

The President: I have given leave of absence to the Lord Bishop for tomorrow afternoon and Thursday morning. Mr Thomas from tomorrow afternoon. Mr Ashford for part of tomorrow afternoon and Loayreyder for part of Thursday, if we are still sitting.

Procedural –
Order of business

The President: Now, Mr Thomas has seven Items of secondary legislation on the Order Paper, Items 25 and 35 to 40. I have received a request from the Council of Ministers to take these Items earlier in the sitting because of Mr Thomas's leave of absence.

If agreed, I would propose to take them after the Statements, so that will be after Item 7 and before Item 8. Is the Court content?

Members: Agreed.

Bills for Signature

The President: The Income Tax Bill 2022 is ready for signature. With the consent of the Court it will be circulated for signing while we proceed with other business. Is the Court content?

Members: Agreed.

1. Papers laid before the Court

The President: We turn to Item 1 and I call on the Clerk to lay papers.

The Clerk: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.
Ta mee cur roish y Whaiyl ny pabyryn enmyssit ayns ayrn nane jeh'n Chlaare Obbyr.
Thank you, Mr President. I lay before the Court the Papers listed at Item 1 of the Order Paper.

Items subject to motion that have had six weeks on the Register of Business

Local Government Act 1985

Chester Street and Drumgold Street (Off-Street Car Park) (Revocation) Byelaws 2022 *[SD 2022/0129] [MEMO]*

Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992

Exceptional Needs Grants and Budgeting Loans (Amendment) Regulations 2022 *[SD 2022/0162] [MEMO]*

Beneficial Ownership Act 2017

Beneficial Ownership (Civil Penalties) Regulations 2022 *[SD 2022/0163] [MEMO]*

European Union and Trade Act 2019

Russia Sanctions (Application) (No. 7) Regulations 2022 *[SD 2022/0168] [MEMO]*

Bank (Recovery and Resolution) Act 2020

Bank (Recovery and Resolution) Administrative Levy Order 2022 *[SD 2022/0178] [MEMO]*

Social Security Act 2000

Social Security Legislation (Benefits) (Application) (Amendment) (No. 5) Order 2022 *[SD 2022/0183] [MEMO]*

Social Security Legislation (Benefits) (Application) (Amendment) (No.6) Order 2022 *[SD 2022/0188] [MEMO]*

Customs and Excise Act 1993

Taxation (Cross-Border Trade) Act 2018 (Application) (Amendment) (No.2) Order 2022 *[SD 2022/0184] [MEMO]*

Export Control (Amendment) Order 2022 (Application) Order 2022 *[SD 2022/0185] [MEMO]*

Coroners Act 1983

Coroners Fees Order 2022 *[SD 2022/0194] [MEMO]*

Harbours Act 2010

Harbour (Dues and Charges) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2022 *[SD 2022/0151] [MEMO]*

Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2011

Shared Equity Purchase Assistance (First Home Fixed) (Amendment) Scheme 2022 *[SD 2022/0169] [MEMO]*

Shared Equity Purchase Assistance (First Home Choice) (Amendment) Scheme 2022 *[SD 2022/0170] [MEMO]*

Local Government Act 1985

Western Swimming Pool Board (Amendment) Order 2022 *[SD 2022/0173] [MEMO]*

Northern Swimming Pool Board (Amendment) Order 2022 *[SD 2022/0174] [MEMO]*

Southern Swimming Pool Board (Amendment) (No.2) *[SD 2022/0172] [MEMO]*

Climate Change Act 2021

Climate Change (Public Bodies' Reporting Requirements) Regulations 2022 *[SD 2022/0124] [MEMO]*

Financial Provisions and Currency Act 2011

Green Living Grant (Amendment) Scheme 2022 *[SD 2022/0195] [MEMO]*

Reports

Tynwald Commissioner for Administration Fifth Annual Report *[PP 2022/0080]*

Anti-Bribery and Corruption Strategy 2022 - 2027 *[GD 2022/0055]*

Items subject to motion that have not had six weeks on the Register of Business

Customs and Excise Management Act 1986 & Hydrocarbon Oil Duties Act 1986
Hydrocarbon Oil Duties Act 1986 (Amendment) (No. 2) Order 2022 *[SD 2022/0146] [MEMO]*

Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992
Employed Person's Allowance (General) (Amendment) Regulations *[SD 2022/0208] [MEMO]*

Elections (Keys and Local Authorities) Act 2020
Elections (Local Authorities) Regulations 2022 *[SD 2022/0230] [MEMO]*

Manx Care Act 2021
Manx Care Act 2021 (Schedule 2) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 *[SD 2022/0220] [MEMO]*

National Health Service Act 2001
National Health Service (Complaints) Regulations 2022 *[SD 2022/0221] [MEMO]*

Children and Young Persons Act 2001
Social Services for Children (Complaints) Regulations 2022 *[SD 2022/0223] [MEMO]*

Social Services Act 2011
Social Services (Complaints) Regulations 2022 *[SD 2022/0222] [MEMO]*
Health and Social Care Ombudsman Body (Constitution, etc.) Regulations 2022 *[SD 2022/0214] [MEMO]*

Financial Provisions and Currency Act 2011
Isle of Man Homes for Ukraine (Host Payment) Scheme 2022 *[SD 2022/0215]*
Pre-School Credit Scheme 2022 *[SD 2022/0231] [MEMO]*

Reports

Isle of Man Government Childcare Strategy *[GD 2022/0050]*

Department of Home Affairs Delivery Plan 2022-23 Quarter 1 Update (March - May 2022) *[GD 2022/0064]*

Items not subject to motion that have had six weeks on the Register of Business

Documents subject to negative resolution

European Union and Trade Act 2019 & Council Regulation (EC) No 428/2009
Trade in Dual-Use Items (Amendment) Regulations 2022 *[SD 2022/0176] [MEMO]*

Value Added Tax Act 1996
Value Added Tax (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2022 *[SD 2022/0191] [MEMO]*
Value Added Tax (Part IVA) (Revocation, Saving and Transitional Provision) Regulations 2022 *[SD 2022/0200] [MEMO]*

Taxation (Cross-border Trade) Act 2018
Excise Goods (Holding, Movement and Duty Point) (Modification) Regulations 2022 *[SD 2022/0201] [MEMO]*

Document subject to no procedure

Elections (Keys and Local Authorities Act) 2020

Elections (Keys and Local Authorities) Local Authority Regulations 2022 *[SD 2022/0206] [MEMO]*

Appointed Day Order

Statute Law Revision Act 2021

Statute Law Revision Act 2021 (Appointed Day) Order 2022 *[SD 2022/0192]*

Reports

Report of the Select Committee of Tynwald on Footpaths, Bridleways and Greenlanes (Petition for Redress of Grievance) 2021-22 Volume 1 *[PP 2022/0069 (1)]*

Report of the Select Committee of Tynwald on Footpaths, Bridleways and Greenlanes (Petition for Redress of Grievance) 2021-22 Volume 2 *[PP 2022/0069 (2)]*

Financial Intelligence Unit Strategic Objectives and Annual Plan 2022/2023 *[GD 2022/0051]*

Health and Care Transformation Programme Annual Report 2021-2022 *[GD 2022/0059]*

Report by the UK Government Actuary on the operation of the Social Security Acts in the Isle of Man for the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2017 *[GD 2022/0046]*

Financial Provisions and Currency Act 2011 - Annual Report to June 2022 *[GD 2022/0052]*

Report on Waste Strategy *[GD 2022/0054]*

Social Affairs Policy Review Committee - First report for the session 2021-22: Suicide *[PP 2022/0079]*

Items not subject to motion that have not had six weeks on the Register of Business

Document subject to no procedure

Education Act 2001

School Catchment Areas Order 2022 *[SD 2022/0171] [MEMO]*

Council of Ministers Act 1990

The Assignment of Ministers Instrument 2022 *[GC 2022/0007]*

Appointed Day Orders

Sexual Offences and Obscene Publications Act 2021

Sexual Offences and Obscene Publications Act 2021 (Appointed Day) (No. 1) Order 2022 *[SD 2022/0193]*

Liquor Licensing and Public Entertainments Act 2021

Liquor Licensing and Public Entertainments Act 2021 (Appointed Day) (No. 1) Order 2022 *[SD 2022/0189]*

Reports

Environment and Infrastructure Policy Review Committee - First report for the session 2021-22: The Meat Plant - Volume 2 *[PP 2022/0077]*

Chapter 7 - Government Code *[GD 2022/0065]*

Digital Strategy 2022-2027 *[GD 2022/0041]*

Questions

CHIEF MINISTER

1. Endemic approach to COVID –
Whether conditions for supporting are met

The Hon. Member for Rushen (Dr Haywood) to ask the Chief Minister:

Whether the Chief Minister is satisfied that the conditions supporting the endemic approach to living with COVID are still being met; and if he will make a statement.

The President: We turn to Item 2, this is Questions, and I call on the Hon. Member for Rushen, Dr Haywood, to ask Question 1.

Dr Haywood: Thank you, Mr President.

I would like to ask the Chief Minister whether he is satisfied that the conditions supporting the endemic approach to living with COVID are still being met; and if he will make a statement?

The President: I call on Ard-Shirveishagh, Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister (Mr Cannan): Mr President, on 1st April 2022, the Isle of Man moved to treat coronavirus as an endemic disease, similar to other illnesses such as flu and norovirus.

In the document published by this Government entitled 'Moving to an Endemic Approach' the general return to normality was based on a number of assumptions: firstly, that our health services were operating normally; secondly, that vaccines remained available and effective; thirdly, that there were no new variants of concern; fourthly, that the situation on the Island was stable; and fifthly, that the British Isles situation was stable.

These assumptions continue to be reviewed and there has been no broad change in any of these areas. So, for the time being, whilst there may be changes in the numbers of people infected, there does not appear to be a need to increase levels of Government intervention at this time.

That is not to say, however, that we are being complacent. We should be under no misapprehension that the winter will bring with it additional pressures on our Health Service, not just through COVID-19, but through other winter respiratory viruses such as influenza. That is why one of the first actions of our Interim Director of Public Health was to work with the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Home Affairs to set up a working group to co-ordinate plans for the coming winter. The first meeting of the group was on 7th July 2022. The Interim Director of Public Health is developing a plan to enhance surveillance of respiratory diseases over this coming winter. Manx Care has also been working on a draft winter plan. These plans will be fully developed by the end of September.

It is important, Mr President, that we are prepared, not just within the Health Service, but more broadly to respond to challenges which may arise from increased numbers of people affected by winter viruses.

It was always expected that levels of COVID-19 circulating in the community would ebb and flow significantly, with periods of higher infection in response to particular circumstances. For example, we have recently seen higher levels of COVID-19 increase following the TT, as well as bank holiday events which also have a likely impact on the pattern of spread. However, the overall situation in the Isle of Man and the British Isles is being carefully monitored and I am satisfied that adequate precautions in relation to the ongoing risks posed by COVID-19 are being pursued.

The President: Supplementary, Dr Haywood.

Dr Haywood: Thank you.

Can I ask then, in that context, what work is currently underway to monitor for variants of concern and their arrival in the Isle of Man? How many samples are being sent for genetic sequencing each week? And during the recent wave of TT-associated infections was that genetic testing number increased?

I am sure the Chief Minister will agree with me that if one of the conditions is no new variants of concern that we have to be actively looking for that (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) and carrying out surveillance. How can we be certain that no new variants of concern are here? Is there a clear policy of testing in place? And does that number increase during the waves that we will be experiencing?

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: Mr President, I will respond in detail by written format as to exactly how the search for new variants is being undertaken. But my understanding is that that is being monitored and effectively reported to the Isle of Man via the UK Department of Health.

The President: Supplementary, Dr Haywood.

Dr Haywood: Thank you.

Further to that, can I ask what work has been undertaken to recognise that high levels of COVID infection and repeated infections – which we are now seeing because the natural immunity from Omicron does not last more than about 28 days, apparently – is going to expose a greater number of people to long COVID? The estimates vary that this may be up to 5% for each round of infection.

Has the economic impact of allowing high levels of infection been assessed? What is the predicted impact on productivity, economic growth and the predicted pressure on the benefits system?

Thank you.

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: I think the Hon. Member will recognise that measuring that type of impact into the future is a highly variable task that probably covers and encompasses a huge range of scenarios.

Mr President, my view is that we need to be practical about matters here. We absolutely cannot be complacent about the impact of COVID-19 but we also must recognise the significant economic damage that is brought about by Government actions in that respect, such as asking people to stay at home and even moving towards such items as wearing masks. So we do need to take our future actions ensuring that we have fully evaluated the situation, recognising of course

the negative impact of any change in COVID-19 circumstances. The Council of Ministers will continue to do that on a considered and practical basis.

The President: Supplementary, Ms Lord-Brennan.

Ms Lord-Brennan: Thank you, Mr President.

Would the Chief Minister agree with me that in terms of how emerging variants of concern are identified that these will be picked up via existing systems of epidemiological surveillance, including wastewater surveillance and genomic sequencing undertaken from time-to-time by Noble's Pathology Lab to identify strains in circulation? That is then part of the response in terms of Public Health, and I think it might helpful to acknowledge that in terms of the questioner's Question.

Thank you.

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: Can I thank the Cabinet Office Minister for her helpful question there, Mr President, which I think speaks for itself.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President.

With regard to Minister Lord-Brennan's input, could the Chief Minister give us a little bit more information, please, on this surveillance that is currently occurring?

Thank you.

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: I will be happy to write to Hon. Members, as I have already suggested, giving a full-level breakdown about the surveillance, how many tests are undertaken, when they are undertaken and what happens to the subsequent results of those tests.

2. Climate Change Plan 2022-27 – Absence from Register of Business and July Order Paper

The Hon. Member for Rushen (Mr Speaker) to ask the Chief Minister:

Why the Climate Change Plan 2022-27 has not been be put on the Register of Business or on the Order Paper for the July 2022 sitting of Tynwald in Douglas.

The President: We move to Question 2, and I call on the Hon. Member for Rushen, Loayreyder.

The Speaker: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

I beg leave to ask the Chief Minister why the Climate Change Plan 2022-27 has not been put on the Register of Business or on the Order Paper for the July 2022 sitting of Tynwald in Douglas?

The President: I call on Ard-shirveishagh, the Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister (Mr Cannan): Mr President, I thank the Hon. Member, Mr Speaker, for his Question. Of course he would not have known at the time, but he will now find that the Climate

Change plan *has* been put on the Register for Business; and I would like to assure him and the Hon. Court that I will give an update on that plan in my Climate Change Statement later in the sitting.

The President: Supplementary, Loayreyder

The Speaker: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.
Will the Chief Minister accept that by not putting the plan on in July – in fact it should have been done by April – that the Government is actually already in breach of the Climate Change Act?

Mr Wannenburgh: Hear, hear.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: I acknowledge that we have been delayed in this process, but I would suggest that it is better to get it right than get it wrong. I hope Hon. Members will find the documentation that is on the Register of Business now, and due for debate in October, to be of significant interest to them.

The President: Supplementary, Loayreyder.

The Speaker: I am just wondering what impact the six-month delay – possibly more by the time we have debated it in this place in October – is going to have on the Government's implementation plan?

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: I think many of those actions, strategies and commitments that are outlined are already at the planning stage. I would hope it would have an absolutely minimal impact, Mr President, in terms of setting out to achieve our Climate Change Action Plan targets.

TREASURY

3. Maternity and child support payments – Review pre-2023 Budget

The Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew (Mr Moorhouse) to ask the Minister for the Treasury:

Whether maternity and child support payments will be reviewed before the Budget in 2023.

The President: We move on to Question 3 and I call on the Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President.
I would like to ask the Treasury Minister whether maternity and child support payments will be reviewed before the Budget in 2023?
Thank you.

The President: I call on the Shirveishagh, Minister for Treasury, to reply.

The Minister for the Treasury (Dr Allinson): Thank you, Mr President.

In answering the Hon. Member's Question, I have assumed that he is referring to the amounts of Maternity Allowance and Child Benefit payable under the Social Security legislation. I can confirm that the rates of all Social Security benefits and allowances will be reviewed by Treasury in the autumn, with new rates coming into effect from the start of the new tax year.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President, and thank you, Minister.

Is the current Maternity Allowance seen as adequate? It does not appear to have been increased since 2011. Why is less paid if you are self-employed? And also there is no additional payment made for multiple births. Are those the sort of things that will be considered going forward?

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you very much, Mr President.

If I could just respond to the Hon. Member, as regards Maternity Allowance, the amount payable to a woman depends on whether she is employed or self-employed. If she was employed, and subject to satisfying the work and earnings tests, she would be paid Maternity Allowance at the rate of 90% of her average earnings during the relevant period, subject to a maximum of £179.85 per week. If she was self-employed and has been paying Class 2 self-employed National Insurance contributions, she would be paid Maternity Allowance at the standard rate, which is currently worth £156.66 a week. Maternity Allowance can be paid for up to 39 weeks and is not means tested.

In terms of his further questions, we have to recognise the significant cost of Maternity Allowance and also statutory maternity pay does not exist on the Island at the moment. Instead, Maternity Allowance is payable to qualifying employees irrespective of their rights to contracted maternity pay, but certainly I would like to assure him and this Hon. Court that during the summer we will be looking at all the benefits we pay; and actually looking at statutory maternity pay and how we treat working families and women who are working and then want to start a family, I hope will be part of the overall review of employment legislation that is also being undertaken by the Department for Enterprise.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President, and thank you, Minister, for that very detailed all-encompassing answer there.

Just one slight concern is the information that is available on the website in terms of the clarity. There is information that is actually stating that maternity support is available for a maximum of 39 weeks and starts at the time of birth, but in reality it is actually going to be influenced by things like contribution of the employer. It is only a small thing, but some ladies have said it has caused issues in the past in terms of clarity. Will the Minister be prepared to look at that, please?

Thank you very much, Mr President.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you very much, Mr President, and I thank the Hon. Member for his question.

As I have said, the issue around various benefits can be a little bit complicated in terms of employment status and what I would suggest is if anyone is a little bit confused by the website, they phone one of our advisers who can go through their personal circumstances and advise them accordingly.

Thank you.

4. Flood Re Scheme –
Progress extending to Island since March 2021

The Hon. Member for Garff (Mrs Caine) to ask the Minister for the Treasury:

What progress has been made since March 2021 with extending the Flood Re scheme to the Island.

The President: We move on to Question 4 and I call on the Hon. Member for Garff, Mrs Caine.

Mrs Caine: Thank you, Mr President.

I would like to ask the Minister for the Treasury what progress has been made since March 2021 with extending the Flood Re scheme to the Island?

The President: Shirveishagh, Minister for the Treasury to reply.

The Minister for the Treasury (Dr Allinson): Thank you, Mr President.

In March 2021 officers at the United Kingdom Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Defra, were contacted regarding possible access to the Flood Re scheme for Island residents. During April 2021 the UK responded, detailing the issues that would need to be resolved or worked through.

An initial response was provided and the first formal meeting with the UK was held in June 2021. Two key issues that must be resolved before any further progress could be made emerged from the discussion. The first key issue is how to align the Isle of Man rateable values of properties with the United Kingdom council tax banding for the calculation of the Flood Re premiums.

The second key issue was how to establish legislation to support the extension of the scheme to the Isle of Man. It was confirmed that this would require an amendment to UK primary legislation.

It is clear that this may only be considered further if it is possible to resolve the first issue, in terms of a formula for notionally aligning our rates with the UK council tax banding system to the satisfaction of the UK. The issue of how to align our rates for the purposes of Flood Re is providing a technical challenge. Consequently, it has not been possible to further progress the matter with the UK Defra so far.

Mr President, it is important to highlight that even if it were possible to address these two key issues, and other secondary issues raised by the UK, it is conceivable that one possible outcome might be that whilst household insurance premiums might become more affordable for some in existing flood-risk areas, others not living in flood-risk areas could be required to pay much higher premiums. This is a risk and clearly a challenge we would need to address.

Thank you.

The President: Supplementary, Mrs Caine.

Mrs Caine: Thank you, and I thank the Minister for his detailed response.

Can he advise whether this is being progressed actively? Whether in fact the Isle of Man reforming its rateable system and aligning Isle of Man properties with the bands in the UK is actively being considered by Treasury? Or is there an alternative way forward that might involve Treasury or the Isle of Man having its own Flood Re scheme for the number of properties – significant numbers in my constituency – but actually impacting people all round the Island, particularly in coastal areas.

What reassurance can he offer those people that there is light at the end of the tunnel and that there will be a safety net for them when they are unable to obtain house insurance?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you very much more, Mr President.

I would like to reassure the Hon. Member that contact is still under way and we are looking at whether we can work with the UK-government valuer in terms of properties to see if a midway point could be achieved.

She is obviously talking for her constituents in Laxey but similarly there are lots of other areas in our Island which are prone to flooding and where, by being on a flood risk map, it does affect both access and cost to insurance. Certainly Treasury has had discussions with local providers to try to make sure that the access to flood insurance is provided as and where possible.

Thank you.

The President: Supplementary, Mrs Caine.

Mrs Caine: Is the Minister aware, following a significant amount of work undertaken in Laxey for reducing the possible impacts of flooding in the village, residents who are able to obtain flood insurance are finding premiums at two or three times the previous amount. So even when flood insurance, house insurance, property insurance is able to be obtained it is at significantly higher rates. Could we find a position where a significant part of Isle of Man coastal resorts actually are uninhabitable or cannot be purchased by ordinary people?

What is the Treasury going to do to prevent that from happening and to provide the necessary ability for people to obtain flood insurance? Is Treasury pursuing Flood Re with the UK government or is it considering another way forward?

Thank you.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you very much, Mr President.

As I have said, Treasury *is* pursuing the issue of access to the Flood Re scheme with the UK government but there are some major problems in terms of that. Again, the Flood Re scheme in the United Kingdom is only meant to last until 2039, by which time hopefully the remedial measures that they will bring in will significantly reduce the risk of flooding.

The Hon. Member and her constituents have benefited from a huge amount of investment in their local area to reduce the risk of flooding, but unfortunately because of the geography – particularly around Laxey – that risk of flooding is always there and traditional insurance companies will always count that in.

She talks about houses being 'uninhabitable'. They are not uninhabitable, what we are talking about is access to flood insurance and the cost of that insurance. What I hope is that by the remedial work that is being carried out by the Isle of Man Government that risk will reduce and so local providers may be able to offer better premiums to her constituents.

Thank you.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President.

With regard to the map, there are still certain concerns regarding Castletown. Have all the correct people been informed about the improvements that have occurred in the town in terms of flood defence improvements?

Thank you very much.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you very much, Mr President.

There is a huge amount of work going on in terms of the flood risk. One of the actions of the previous administration was to consolidate this action with one particular body under the Department of Infrastructure.

Looking forward, we have to see flood risk as being part of overall climate change. Although we are going through a heatwave at the moment and there are concerns about water shortages, these *extremes* of temperature, these *extremes* of weather will continue; and that is why as part of the climate change agenda, we must invest in the infrastructure of our Island to protect both the livelihood and the homes of our residents.

Thank you.

5. Laxey Glen Mills Ltd –
Continuing Treasury support

The Hon. Member for Garff (Mrs Caine) to ask the Minister for the Treasury:

What plans Treasury has to continue supporting Laxey Glen Mills Ltd.

The President: We turn to Question 5 and I call on the Hon. Member for Garff, Mrs Caine.

Mrs Caine: Thank you, Mr President.

Another Question for the Minister for the Treasury, please: can he tell us what plans Treasury has to continue supporting Laxey Glen Mills Ltd?

The President: Shirveishagh**,** Minister for the Treasury to reply.

The Minister for the Treasury (Dr Allinson): Thank you, Mr President.

As Members of this Hon. Court will be aware, the Laxey Glen Mills has been significantly affected by the recent closure of its largest customer. The shareholding in the company is owned by the Chief Secretary and the Chief Financial Officer, and I know they have been in close contact with the directors of the company whilst its board determines the best course of action for the business moving forward.

Of course, the future of the mill is closely aligned to the Island's Food Security Strategy, subject to current consideration by the Department for Environment, Food and Agriculture. Treasury has recently provided cash flow support to the business and has volunteered the use of one of its officers to help prepare management accounts and other financial information.

Mr President, the Treasury and other parts of Government are supporting the business whilst an appropriate future direction is mapped out. I am conscious that we should recognise the hard work and dedication of the staff and management of the mill who are continuing to work through these difficult times.

Thank you.

The President: Supplementary, Mrs Caine.

Mrs Caine: Thank you, Mr President, and I thank the Minister for his Answer.

Can he advise what cash flow support, what level of cash flow has been provided from Treasury and whether that is a temporary measure?

Could he confirm that the previous year there was a £19,000 loss over the entire year? Can he give us any prediction, as primary shareholder, what the Government anticipates that could be this year?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you very much, Mr President.

In terms of the operating loss last year it has to be recognised that the Laxey Glen Mill is sitting on considerable assets at the moment in terms of wheat, and that has to be taken into account in terms of their overall financial position.

In terms of the cash flow that has been provided, this is bringing forward some of the grants and money that Treasury was going to bring over this financial year. I understand that the Hon. Member has Question 12 for the DEFA Minister and hopefully that will elucidate more in terms of the overall strategy for looking at the long-term viability of the mill, looking at the way we support agriculture on our Island and also how we guarantee food security.

But I can tell the Hon. Member for Garff that certainly Treasury is working quite closely with DEFA to ensure that we make the right decision both for the mill itself, but also for the wider aspects of our Island.

Thank you.

EDUCATION, SPORT AND CULTURE

6. Additional Educational Needs Code – Progress implementing

The Hon. Member for Douglas North (Mr Ashford) to ask the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

What progress has been made with the implementation of an Additional Educational Needs Code.

The President: We move on to Question 6 and I call on the Hon. Member for Douglas North, Mr Ashford.

Mr Ashford: Thank you, Mr President.

I beg to ask the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture what progress has been made with the implementation of an Additional Educational Needs Code?

The President: I call the Shirveishagh, Minister for Education, Sport and Culture, to reply.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture (Ms Edge): Thank you, Mr President.

The Department of Education, Sport and Culture has produced an aspirational Additional Educational Needs Code of Practice in consultation with schools, unions, parents and other relevant stakeholders to address a range of issues. Implementation of the Code is dependent upon appropriate budgetary provision. If budget is secured, an implementation plan will be devised

with schools and other relevant stakeholders with a view to having an interim AEN Code in place from September 2023. Statutory elements of the AEN Code will be brought into force once the first Education Amendment Bill has received Royal Assent.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Ashford.

Mr Ashford: Thank you very much, Mr President.

There was a consultation around the Additional Educational Needs Code back in October 2020, so nearly two years ago. In that consultation, the Department committed to continue to draft the AEN Code of Practice, making specific reference to the themes raised in the stakeholder survey.

From the Minister's Answer, it appears that nothing is any further forward because there is no budget for this. Can I ask when the Department intends to come forward. Is it going to be as part of the Budget process, or is it actually going to be an inter-year budget process? It is all very well to have an aspirational code, Mr President, but can I ask is there a code ready to be implemented should the budget be approved?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

The current draft AEN Code is primarily based on a range of existing legislation. However, the code envisages an extended role for schools to create a statutory plan, securing the provision that a child's needs calls for. Current legislation reserves such plans for the Department. The amending legislation that will come before this hon. place also establishes an independent tribunal for parents to challenge provision made for their child. The current legislation only provides for an internal desk appeal.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Ashford.

Mr Ashford: Thank you, Mr President.

I did not hear any timescales in the answer there, Mr President, and what I am specifically asking is, assuming things go to plan for the Department, when it would be expected that an AEN will be in place; because this has been dragging on for a long time now. Parents and carers are getting frustrated going round and round the same circle. So what I am asking is when is it likely to come forward and be actually implemented, and I am wondering if there is an actual timescale, Mr President – not as I received in a previous Question Time from DoI, 'near future' or 'shortly'. Is there an actual timescale?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

I did state in my Answer that we would have an AEN Code hopefully in place for September 2023. I am certainly very keen to make sure that that is the case, and we will work hard to deliver that. However, we are also going through a full funding review for education, which I am sure will pick up on some of the areas. We have done an estimate of what we think implementing this code is going to cost, and that is significant and we will need to have budgetary concurrence from Treasury to implement the code.

The President: Supplementary, Mrs Corlett.

Mrs Corlett: Thank you, Mr President.

Can I ask the Minister is there a clear intention to put the requirement of AEN Code into legislation, and, if so, when will that happen?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

Yes, there is and particularly the independent tribunal element. The legislation is currently being drafted and is coming forward in next year's legislative programme.

Thank you.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Ashford.

Mr Ashford: Thank you, Mr President.

In order to have an AEN there has to be a definition of additional educational needs, Mr President. So can I ask the Minister does the Department have a definition yet of additional education needs, as at the time of the consultation back in October 2020 it was stated that the definition was yet to be determined; and if there is such a definition, can it be shared?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

Certainly the code is ready to go, which will have those definitions in it. I am happy to obviously meet with the Hon. Member and we can go through the work that has been carried out to date so far, but it is envisaged that the new Amendment Bill will give statutory power to the AEN Code of Practice and provide for the identified gaps that were in the legislation in relation to additional educational needs.

The President: Final supplementary, Mr Ashford.

Mr Ashford: Thank you, Mr President.

I will give it another go. A yes or no: is there now a definition of additional educational needs and would the Minister circulate that to all Tynwald Members?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President. I certainly will commit to circulating that.

7. Swimming pool review – Appointment of off-Island consultants

The Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew (Mr Glover) to ask the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Why off-Island consultants have been appointed to conduct the review of swimming pools.

The President: We move on to Question 7. I call on the Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew, Mr Glover.

Mr Glover: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

I seek leave to ask the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture why off-Island consultants have been appointed to conduct the review of swimming pools?

The President: Shirveishagh, Minister for Education, Sport and Culture to reply.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture (Ms Edge): Thank you, Mr President.

The Department followed the Isle of Man Government procurement process to determine which organisation could evidence, via their application, the best value, industry knowledge and experience against the terms of reference for that review. One of the three companies that submitted tenders – Knight, Kavanagh & Page – demonstrated via a scoring system that they were the most suitable organisation to undertake the external review.

I am pleased to advise that the consultant has recently been on the Island to commence the review and the Council of Ministers will look forward to receiving the report at the end of September.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Glover.

Mr Glover: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

Is she confident that an off-Island consultant is going to have knowledge of the unique community sense on the Isle of Man; and what steps are being taken to make that happen?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

Clearly within the scope, stakeholders will be spoken to by the consultants. The other companies that tendered had no background in swimming pools, recreation or leisure; whilst Knight, Kavanagh & Page provided a case study of examples of previous reviews that they have undertaken for sports and leisure facilities across a number of local authorities throughout the British Isles.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President.

It has been suggested that there has been additional communication between the Minister and the team responsible for this review. If that has been the case, will material be provided in terms of what communications have taken place and possibly copies of that?

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

I have certainly had no direct communication with the company involved in the review.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Glover.

Mr Glover: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane. .

Will the Minister confirm who these stakeholders are that she refers to, that are going to be consulted by the off-Island consultants? And will this include interested parties such as people who run swimming clubs etc.?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: I am happy to circulate again the terms of reference of the review, and obviously I will take on board the comments made by the Hon. Member. But certainly swimming clubs have been utilising the pools, so it will be expected that they will look at the charges etc. that have been getting utilised for the pools and for these clubs, to make sure that when they come forward with the outcome for the report that it is fully intensive and has the right understanding of what goes on in our pools, which could be slightly different to the UK. But certainly there are a number of clubs and private companies that use the pools and that will have to be taken into consideration.

The President: Supplementary, Dr Haywood.

Dr Haywood: Thank you, Mr President.

I wonder if the Minister could comment on what mechanism exists for pool users as individuals, as families, as groups, or as organised groups to feed into that; and whether the consultants have been charged with going out and talking to those key stakeholders in the process?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

Clearly there is a short timescale for the outcome of this report to ensure that we have a way forward from September. We are expecting the company to report by the end of July and then it will go to the Council of Ministers for September.

I would not envisage a consultation to go down to individuals. I am sure that does not happen in any other review. However, if anybody does have any comments that they wish to put into the review, they can certainly contact the Department and make them known.

The President: Final supplementary, Mr Glover.

Mr Glover: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

I will try again, in the lane of a Douglas North MHK and a Rushen MHK. We are hearing quite a few people who are very interested parties, particularly at the Southern Pool, who want to have their say on this consultation. It would appear from the Answer – and a straight yes or no – that the stakeholders are only going to be the boards.

Would the Minister confirm that?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: I certainly will not confirm that it is only the boards. The review is to take place by an external consultant and it is down to them to dig deep into the current processes and come back with a report that covers every element of the swimming pools – the regional pools including the NSC, including Ballakermeen High School pool – and to ensure that that is a full, extensive review.

The President: One final supplementary, Loayreyder.

The Speaker: So would the Minister then just clarify what I think I have heard this morning; that there is a review going on, it is going to be finishing within the next 13 days, the public and local Members have not been identified as key stakeholders, it is going to be done by somebody *off-Island* who perhaps has very little experience of the Island context, and that is how this is going to work? (**Several Members:** Hear, hear.) And she finds that acceptable?

I just find that crackers, Eaghtyrane.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: No, certainly, that is not the case.

I will make sure, as the Minister, that the people who need to have input into this extensive review are part of it. Whether that is individual meetings with the consultants, I cannot confirm that here today, but I am happy to circulate the terms of reference for the review that were put out which, Hon. Members, I am happy for you to view.

Certainly there was a tight timescale and I want to make sure this is done appropriately and obviously under our procurement process as well. But the stakeholder for the Southern Pool mainly is the board. It is the boards that have come to us with concerns and I am hopeful that the boards will have a good measure of the users of their pool.

8. School uniforms –
Policy importance and cost impact

The Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew (Mr Moorhouse) to ask the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

When her Department last considered the importance of school uniform policy and the impact of school uniform costs on family budgets.

The President: We move on to Question 8. I call on the Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President.

I would like to ask the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture when her Department last considered the importance of school uniform policy and the impact of school uniform costs on family budgets?

Thank you.

The President: Shirveishagh, Minister for Education, Sport and Culture, to reply.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture (Ms Edge): Thank you, Mr President.

The Department of Education, Sport and Culture recognises the importance of school uniforms in creating identity and a sense of belonging, whilst allowing for a common dress code not driven by fashion or social status.

Schools are currently permitted to make decisions and formulate their own policies with regard to the detailed nature of the uniform in conjunction with their governing body and have well-developed practices and guidance for pupils and parents.

Schools are mindful of the financial burden that uniforms can place upon families, and parents are encouraged to approach schools and the head teacher if they are experiencing particular difficulties. Schools will then support parents in exploring options. Other options are available that include pre-loved uniforms, using funds available from third sector providers and dedicated funds held by the Department.

To help address equality issues around secondary school uniform policy and reduce the cost of school uniform, which can be seen as a barrier to participation in learning, the Department will launch a consultation in due course. The consultation will be open to anyone with an interest in secondary school uniform policy, and primary, but especially pupils, parents, carers, educational professionals, schools and those who provide school uniform items. The views gathered from this consultation will inform future policy and guidance development and help to shape new uniform policy principles which will underpin individual schools' uniform policy.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President, and thank you, Minister.

I appreciate the information on the support that is given to families who are struggling with uniforms. Could that be made available on the website, because that is something that historically I know has been an issue and that additional information would be good?

In terms of the cost to buy a new school uniform, it is over £300. How many schools raised concerns about these costs and has the Department discussed this with Social Security in terms of it being an underlying issue that potentially could be looked at and solved?

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

I would encourage, if the Hon. Member knows of any families that are … encourage them to contact the schools or the Department to see what support is available.

With regard to contacting Social Security there are organisations like social workers that can support families as well. We have not directly contacted Social Security regarding uniform costs. What we have done as a Department is to discuss with our head teachers and make sure that they have a uniform policy that is affordable to families. I am not sure where the cost of £300 has come from, but I have certainly done a little bit of research with our secondary schools today, and a blazer is about £27 and certainly the item of uniform at the largest secondary school that is required for PE is £12 50. So I am not sure … I can understand that perhaps it is £300 if there are a number of students attending a school. However, I am not sure where that figure has come from. But certainly our schools will work with all parents to make sure that the uniform is affordable. We will consult because we need to make sure that we have the views of all who would be impacted.

Thank you.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President.

One of the best elements the first Answer was that recognition of the importance of the school uniform. When children returned to school on 15th June 2020, there was an easing off in terms of the uniform requirement. Is it now seen in all schools that going forward in September 2023 that the school uniform policy will be pushed as a priority?

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

Obviously our school leaders are best placed to understand the needs of their individual settings. And certainly in my previous life, when blazers were introduced at Ballakermeen, I think it was around about 1997, there was a purpose behind that to ensure that there was no peer pressure from others, and it was to identify the school and the ethos of the school, which I am sure the Hon. Member is very aware of as well, of the importance of that.

But ultimately the decision on the school uniform policy ahead of this current academic year is placed with the head teachers and the schools. However, we will look at that going forward and are happy to invite the Hon. Member to come in and support on that.

ENTERPRISE

**9. Laxey Wheel restoration –
Progress**

The Hon. Member for Garff (Mrs Caine) to ask the Minister for Enterprise:

What progress has been made with Laxey Wheel restoration; when it will reopen; what further work will be required; and if he will make a statement.

The President: Now, Hon. Members, we move on to Question 9 and these are a few Questions coming to the Minister for Enterprise. I have had a request that the Member for Enterprise, Mr Johnston, takes those Questions along with Item 42.

Is the Court content? (**Members:** Agreed.) Thank you.

So we now move to Question 9 and I call on the Hon. Member for Garff, Mrs Caine.

Mrs Caine: Thank you, Mr President.

I would like to ask the Member for the Department for Enterprise what progress has been made with Laxey Wheel restoration; when it will reopen; what further work will be required; and if he will make a statement?

The President: I call on the Member, Mr Johnston to reply.

A Member of the Department for Enterprise: (Mr Johnston): Thank you, Mr President, and I thank the Hon. Member for her Question.

I have been advised by Manx National Heritage that the work to repair and conserve the Great Laxey Wheel typifies the opportunities and challenges faced by heritage organisations in ensuring that assets in their care are maintained for future generations. This work requires a bespoke approach to maintenance and repair through a deep understanding of the history and traditional construction. Considerable work has therefore been undertaken on the Laxey Wheel, some of which has only been possible to identify following the erection of scaffolding and the commencement of work. This has understandably led to delays to repairs, which are now due to be completed in full for Phase One by the end of August, subject to resolving a technical issue with the wheel case.

The broader Laxey Wheel site has not been closed to visitors during the conservation work, so will not need to reopen. However, removal of the scaffolding will commence imminently, which will allow the Wheel to be revealed. Whilst the work has been taking place, special hard-hat tours have been arranged to assist in promoting understanding of the significant work being undertaken and the challenges faced, which I am aware the Hon. Member Mrs Caine has attended.

National Heritage recently invited *all* Members of Tynwald for a behind-the-scenes briefing at Laxey Wheel, which has now taken place. MNH extend their thanks to those Members who attended.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Supplementary, Mrs Caine.

Mrs Caine: Thank you, Mr President.

For the record, I tabled the Question before I received that kind invitation and I very much enjoyed it, except for the horsefly bite. *(Laughter)*

The Hon. Member will be aware that the impact on Laxey and the various businesses within the village has been significant, having its major tourist attraction under wraps for most of this

season, just as we are coming out of two years of the pandemic. So would his Department acknowledge that there is a significant impact on the economy of Laxey?

On a couple of other points, would he suggest then that the Wheel will be turning as well as unveiled by the end of August? What further work is going to continue next year?

Is he also aware how significantly visitor numbers have been impacted? Does he know, for instance, what the normal visitor numbers would be at the Wheel compared with this season? I would suggest that they are very much down – and however excellent, interesting and informative the hard-hat tours are, they are very minimal in terms of the numbers of people who can benefit from them.

So there has been a significant impact and I think there is a Phase Two to come. Can we reassure people that the Wheel to all intents and purposes will be open and turning and able to become the iconic attraction that Laxey has benefited from for at least 150 years?

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Member to reply.

Mr Johnston: Thank you, Mr President; and I thank the Hon. Member for that very long question. *(Laughter)*

I think to start with, to my knowledge the Department has not been contacted by any businesses in that area, but I do suggest that they reach out to the Business Agency. The Department does not tend to financially support businesses which have been impacted by the closure of attractions; however, there is external consultancy and a range of other support that the Department may be able to provide. So I would suggest that if anyone does have any issues, they do contact the Department on that.

As far as when the actual Wheel will be turning, I do not have that information, but I shall find that out for you. What I can say is that yes, Phase Two will be starting soon. There is a tender process going out for that at the moment, and we are hoping that the work on that will start in August, with the completion for next March 2023.

I cannot think what else you asked now … As far as that extra work that needs doing, I think what I can say there is that there will be more work to do, absolutely. They are looking at replacing at this stage around about a third of the wheel buckets and the wheel rims, but there is another two-thirds to do. That will be getting done over a six-year period with minimum scaffolding, so that should hopefully not really affect the day-to-day operations and it as a visitor attraction.

As far as visitor numbers are concerned, again I do not have that information, but I will be able to get that to you.

The President: Supplementary, Dr Allinson.

The Minister for the Treasury (Dr Allinson): Thank you, Mr President.

I would like to thank the Hon. Member of the Department for Enterprise for his comprehensive Answer. Would he agree with me that conservation and repair work on something as iconic as the Lady Isabella should not be rushed, but should be done very carefully and in the professional manner it has been handled by Manx National Heritage?

I also would like to thank him for his assurance that this is the start of ongoing work that is being done to keep the Lady Isabella turning, not just now but into the future.

Thank you.

Two Members: Hear, hear.

The President: Member to reply.

Mr Johnston: Thank you, Mr President, and I thank the Hon. Member for his comments.

They are absolutely right. I appreciate that this has taken longer than we expected, but again I think it is important to ensure that it is done properly. There have been issues, which have caused delays. The original four-month programme has been extended to seven months. Clearly, there have been material disruptions with ongoing issues globally. Obviously again the work cannot be done in inclement weather, it is quite difficult; and also it is making sure that the unique masonry and the paint finishes are there. There are issues making sure the paint is correct and again this is taking a bit of time.

I think that is the important point, actually. It is really important they do this properly and get it right, and that it is right for the future.

The Speaker: Hear, hear.

The President: Supplementary, Mrs Caine.

Mrs Caine: Thank you, Mr President. I am very grateful to the Minister for the Treasury for his intervention.

Would the Member for Enterprise agree with me that when he speaks about the bespoke approach to maintenance, it is very important that adequate budget is allocated to our heritage organisation to ensure ongoing and routine maintenance is undertaken in a timely way? And that the major restoration such as this one – which is coming along maybe every 40 years – that we avoid unnecessary deterioration by adequately investing in our heritage assets?

Thank you, Mr President.

A Member: Hear, hear.

The President: The Member to reply.

Mr Johnston: Yes, thank you, Mr President.

I would agree. I think we have to see this as a long-term investment. When we look at the Visitor Strategy, the importance of attracting more people to the Island, these sites are incredibly important, they are a part of our heritage and it is incredibly important that we look after them.

A Member: Hear, hear.

The President: Final supplementary, Mr Wannenburgh.

Mr Wannenburgh: Thank you, Mr President; and I thank the Member for his information so far.

Could he tell me how much the cost of this refurbishment is?

Thank you.

The President: The Member to reply.

Mr Johnston: Thank you, Mr President.

What I can tell the Hon. Member is on the cost of Phase One, the range at this stage is between £560,000 and £650,000. We have not got the final figure yet, that is still under review. Then Phase Two, I cannot give a price on that at the moment because that is out to tender. So at this stage it would be inappropriate to bring any figures in.

10. Green Living Grant Scheme assessment software – Fossil-fuel boiler removal and replacement support

The Hon. Member for Rushen (Dr Haywood) to ask the Minister for Enterprise:

Whether the Green Living Grant Scheme assessment software supports the removal of fossil-fuel boilers and their replacement with low-carbon alternatives.

The President: We move on to Question 10. I call on the Hon. Member for Rushen, Dr Haywood.

Dr Haywood: Thank you, Mr President.

I should like to ask the Member for Enterprise whether the Green Living Grant Scheme assessment software supports the removal of fossil-fuel boilers and their replacement with low-carbon alternatives?

The President: Member for Enterprise to reply.

A Member of the Department for Enterprise (Mr Johnston): Thank you, Mr President, and I thank the Hon. Member for her Question.

The Green Living Grant Scheme was launched in October 2021 and provides financial support for up to £6,000 in the form of Manx Home Energy Audits and grants towards energy improvement schemes. In order to help reduce carbon emissions from domestic properties, which in turn assists the Government's target on the Isle of Man being carbon neutral by 2050.

Due to global fuel cost rises and the associated increased cost of living, the Scheme was modified in April 2022 to remove the priority order in which works must be completed to enable additional flexibility for applicants. It is important to note though that only works listed on the Manx Home Energy Audit report are eligible for grant support.

To date the Scheme has received 1,860 applications, 1,829 of which have been authorised for Manx Home Energy Audits and 1,003 initial audits completed. Seventy-four grant applications have also been received.

As the Scheme progresses, and increasing numbers of grant applications are being received, a number of policy matters have been identified which are being considered in conjunction with the Climate Change Board.

To answer the specific Question raised by the Hon. Member, the software underpinning the Manx Home Energy Audit report does not appear to recommend replacing fossil-fuel boilers with low-carbon alternatives such as ground source and air source heat pumps. This is according to the data the Department has seen so far. It appears that these items are not being recommended by the auditing software as the parameters for the recommendation of these products are very narrow.

Normally for a Manx Home Energy Audit to recommend low-carbon heating alternatives, the property must be very well insulated and meet other criteria which would generally mean that the property would already be highly rated in terms of energy efficiency and, therefore, ineligible for funding under the Scheme.

The Department is working closely with the Climate Change Board to regularly review the Scheme, respond to queries and adapt the Scheme where possible to meet the needs of the applicants and broader Government policy in respect of climate change.

The President: Supplementary, Dr Haywood.

Dr Haywood: Thank you.

Some of the home energy assessors have been in to see some of my constituents, and they have been suggesting to those homeowners that their fossil-fuel boilers should be replaced with new fossil-fuel boilers, but not with anything else. I take on board the points about how well insulated the home is, but does the Member appreciate that actually these assessments and the subsequent suggestions that we make need to be in line with decarbonisation that is needed to achieve net-zero; and will there be further modifications to this to drive the system in that direction, please?

The President: Member to reply.

Mr Johnston: Thank you, Mr President.

Yes, I hear what the Member says. I think the situation is, as far as I understand this, my limited information is that the software package that actually … it is quite limited and narrow in its appraisal and it tends to throw up this as an option, when actually it is not appropriate. As a Government, we know the commitment has been made to net-zero by 2050 and therefore that is not considered appropriate.

What I can say is that around about 90% of the audits that have been done so far on properties, most of those properties are grade D and below. So the important thing there is looking at the fabric first, is what is really important. The main aim here is to make sure that we are increasing those properties' energy efficiency first and foremost, because at this stage a more efficient boiler would really not be efficient at all – that is, at this stage.

11. DfE engagement with businesses – Access to and use of cash

The Hon. Member for Douglas North (Mr Ashford) to ask the Minister for Enterprise:

What engagement his Department has had with businesses, and what support is being provided to ensure customers can both access and use cash for purchases.

The President: We move on to Question 11. I call on the Hon. Member for Douglas North, Mr Ashford.

Mr Ashford: Thank you, Mr President.

I beg to ask the Member of the Department for Enterprise what engagement his Department has had with businesses, and what support is being provided to ensure customers can both access and use cash for purchases?

The President: I call on the Member for Enterprise, Mr Johnston to reply.

A Member of the Department for Enterprise (Mr Johnston): Thank you, Mr President, and may I thank the Hon. Member for his Question.

As Hon. Members are aware, the findings of an Access to Cash Report commissioned by the Department was presented to this Hon. Court at its January sitting. In this report a number of recommendations for further attention and analysis were identified, many of which related to the use of non-cash-based processes in businesses and the availability of cash for cash-based purchases by customers. I have not been made aware that there are any immediate issues with businesses accepting, and customers wishing to make, cash payments.

My Department, through Finance Isle of Man, continues to have a close working relationship with the Isle of Man banking sector. The Department recently hosted a round-table discussion on

the subject of the continued reduction in the number of cash transactions on the Island. The Department is continuing to monitor the situation in regard to the availability of ATMs and broadband roll-out to aid with non-cash transactions.

Business Isle of Man will shortly be conducting a survey across businesses in the relevant sectors, to identify if there are any specific barriers being seen or felt around cash-based transactions. This survey will include an assessment of the levels of cash taken by businesses, looking to understand how it is banked, and also review opportunities and sentiment around enhanced cashback services. The findings of this survey will give a true indication of the situation and identify what are the real-world issues with cash-based purchases, both from a business and customer position.

Once the survey is complete and an assessment is made of the results, the Department will look at what the potential options are for targeted support that may be needed to facilitate better access to cash if this is a problem. As I mentioned earlier, I have not been made aware that there are any immediate issues with businesses accepting and customers wishing to make cash purchases, or non-cash purchases for that matter. If Hon. Members have any specific information relating to issues around cash purchases, then I will be more than happy to pass these to the relevant officers for action

Thank you.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Ashford.

Mr Ashford: Thank you, Mr President; and can I thank the Hon. Member for the Department for that comprehensive Answer.

He says that he is not aware of any issues, so let me make him aware of some, Mr President, right here and now. I have been contacted by quite a few individuals who are reliant on cash for various different reasons where they are now finding, particularly in retail and hospitality settings, that a business's acceptance of cash has actually declined and they are actually preferring card payments – which is quite understandable for the business, because it is actually easier for the business and they are not having to handle cash. But it is causing issues.

So while the Member has focused very much in the Answer on access to cash, that is all well and good, but would the Member agree with me that once you have that cash you have to then be able to use it? There needs to be more engaging with business to understand the barriers that are being caused to those businesses being willing to accept cash as we move forward.

The President: Member to reply.

Mr Johnston: Thank you, Mr President; and may I thank the Hon. Member for his response.

I do not disagree. I think that is absolutely right. I think it is very important to make sure that as we go through this transition – it is fair to say we are going through a transition away from cash – that we do not leave anybody behind. That is incredibly important and I think, as part of this process and as part of the Access to Cash report, that very much has that at its heart to ensure that it is relevant across the whole of our society. Certainly the work that is going on with the actions and certainly the work that is going on with the Departments, whether it is access to ATMs or digital education, or looking at banking hubs and looking at coverage – and maybe, as change is happening in post offices again, how we make sure that there is still access.

All these things are very important and need to be considered going forward.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President, and thank you for these reassuring answers.

The problem is that this is happening within Government. There was an issue several months ago in terms of engagement and DoI had decided to remove the cash option for their tenants. Was it something that was raised by Enterprise at the time?

Thank you.

The President: Member to reply.

Mr Johnston: Thank you, Mr President.

I think the answer to that is no, it was not raised by Enterprise at the time. I think that the point is what Enterprise has been engaged in is that broad survey, not just across Government but across the whole of our sector, the whole of the economy to ensure that people, as I said, are not being left behind and that they still have access to what they need.

That is something that, again as I mentioned earlier, there will be a transition away from cash, but we must make sure that we are taking everybody with us and not leaving anybody behind on that journey.

The President: Supplementary, Dr Allinson.

The Minister for the Treasury (Dr Allinson): Thank you, Mr President. I would like to thank the Member for the Department for Enterprise for his answers and for his reassurance that a widespread consultation is going to be taking place to assess the impact of cash and the use of it in our society.

Would he agree with me that, really, it is up to small businesses to decide how they accept payment? Whilst some will only accept cash, increasingly some will only accept card. We need to understand the reasons for that. Sometimes it is convenience (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) but, as the Hon. Member for Douglas North knows, sometimes those firms that only take cash are a little bit of a concern. So I am glad that his Department is looking into the reasons for this to facilitate payments for all the people on our Island.

Thank you.

The President: Member to reply.

Mr Johnston: Thank you, Mr President.

I thank the Hon. Member for his comments and I fully endorse what he said.

The President: Final supplementary, Mr Ashford.

Mr Ashford: Thank you very much, Mr President.

Would the Hon. Member for the Department agree with me that of course it is entirely at the behest of any business what they do, but that as we move through the transition, as the Hon. Member says, it is important that people are not left behind? In fact the lack of ability to be able to use cash once accessed can actually cause social exclusion for some. While it might be a small minority it is actually generally a very vulnerable minority of individuals. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.)

So would the Hon. Member agree with me that in light of his original Answer – and I welcome the fact there will be further engagement – will he pledge that that engagement will not just be around *access* to cash, which has been very much the focus of the Answer, but specifically the *use* of cash as well and understanding what barriers and for what reasons businesses may be refusing use of cash?

The President: Member to reply.

Mr Johnston: Thank you, Mr President.

I am perfectly happy to take those comments on board from the Hon. Member, and as I said as part of the whole process I think he is quite right what he is saying and that needs to be part of that process going forward.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

**12. Flour production –
Securing on Island**

The Hon. Member for Garff (Mrs Caine) to ask the Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture:

What her Department's plan is to secure on-Island flour production.

The President: We move on to Question 12 and I call on the Hon. Member for Garff, Mrs Caine.

Mrs Caine: Thank you, Mr President.

I would like to ask the Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture what her Department's plan is to secure on-Island flour production?

The President: I call on the Shirveishagh, Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture to reply.

The Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture (Mrs Barber): Thank you, Mr President, and thank you to the Hon. Member for Garff for the Question.

As the Court will be aware, the loss of Ramsey Bakery has brought into sharp focus the Island's flour production and its long-term future. Ramsey Bakery took 80% of the flour produced from Laxey Glen Mills, and its closure has naturally had a significant impact on the business model of the mill. Given the mill's role in food security, and as part of the Food Matters Strategy, my Department has recently provided support for Laxey Glen Mill to assess its future options through a paper.

My Department has held discussions with the Manx National Farmers' Union to understand the concerns of their members, as well as a number of bakery businesses on Island to understand their long-term plans and also with milling wheat growers. However, the role for my Department is a tricky one in this situation. Our aim is to support the wheat producers, but we are not shareholders or involved with the strategic direction or operations of Laxey Glen Mill. Whilst we are listening and keen to understand how we can support the Island's wheat growers, we, like them, must await the outcome of the report and the agreed long-term plan for the mill.

Regarding the security of on-Island flour production, I understand that for at least the next 24 months this has a stable footing, with 1,300 tonnes of wheat available on Island to be milled. The long-term plan for the mill will of course determine more clearly the longer-term future of flour production on Island. The report is due in the next month. However, this is dependent on some external factors. The report will belong to the mill and the shareholders will need to consider, once it is received, what action will be taken next, including whether the report will be published.

DEFA will of course work with Treasury and other stakeholders to ensure we get the right solution for our Island.

Thank you, Mr President.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

13. Respite facilities –
Plans to upgrade and expand

The Hon. Member for Douglas North (Mr Ashford) to ask the Minister for Health and Social Care:

What plans there are to upgrade and expand respite facilities.

The President: We move on to Question 13. I call on the Hon. Member for Douglas North, Mr Ashford.

Mr Ashford: Thank you, Mr President.

I beg to ask the Minister for Health and Social Care what plans there are to upgrade and expand respite facilities?

The President: I call on the Shirveishagh, Minister for Health and Social Care to reply.

The Minister for Health and Social Care (Mr Hooper): Thank you very much, Mr President.

Manx Care has a range of respite services that are delivered directly and indirectly through third sector organisations. In regard to adult social care, respite is directly provided in three specific areas: learning disabilities, older people and dementia care.

Learning disability respite is currently provided at Hollydene Unit, Radcliffe Villas in Douglas, where there are 10 beds dedicated to respite and one for emergency use. Hollydene is unable to operate at maximum capacity as the building is no longer compliant with the Regulation of Care Act and occupancy levels are based on risk and service user compatibility. The service is currently used by 52 adults with a learning disability.

The construction of a new respite facility is included in the Isle of Man Government capital programme, with plans at an advanced stage to replace Radcliffe Villas and construct a purpose-built respite facility for adults with a learning disability. This new facility will increase the number of available beds to 12, but it will also enhance the current capacity levels which are restricted by the limitations of the existing building.

Respite for older people is available at various care home locations across the Island, with four beds at Cummal Mooar in Ramsey, four beds at Reayrt ny Baie in Douglas and two beds at Southlands in Port St Mary. Both Reayrt ny Baie and Cummal Mooar are no longer compliant with the Regulation of Care Act and will be replaced as part of the Isle of Man Government Capital Programme. Reayrt ny Baie will be replaced by Summerhill View, currently under construction on the former Glenside site at the Governor's Bridge junction in Douglas; whilst the planning application has been submitted for the replacement of Cummal Mooar on the former Cooil Ny Marrey site in Ramsey. The new buildings will provide improved respite accommodation for older people.

Respite for older people with dementia is provided at Sweetbriar Unit in Douglas, Reayrt Skyal in Ramsey and the Gansey Unit in Port St Mary, all of which have one respite bed. There are no current plans to further increase the current number of beds.

Ramsey and District Cottage Hospital provides respite for seven service users who access the service two to three times a year each. The service at Martin Ward was closed to new patients in January 2018, as it was the view of the clinical team that receiving respite on a hospital ward is not appropriate. However, the Department at Manx Care have honoured the commitment for patients who have received this service for several years prior to closure.

In regard to services directly provided as part of the Social Care, Children and Families portfolio, Thie Caarjys – or Ramsey Respite Centre – provide seven overnight respite beds for children and young people with a disability. At present, this service is currently stretched, due to having to

accommodate several young people in Ramsey on a more permanent basis. Overnight respite for some families is temporarily reduced as a result. Additional resources are currently being sought to ensure Manx Care continue to support families in need of this provision. The Braddan Hub also provides respite care during the day, usually after school hours and holidays or weekends to support families where children have a disability.

A review is to be commissioned in the near future to holistically review respite services for children with disabilities on the Island and Social Care will then have a clear way forward as to how these services need to be expanded and upgraded.

In addition to the services provided directly by Manx Care, two respite flats are commissioned with Leonard Cheshire Disability at Thie Quinney in Ramsey. This service provides respite to adults aged 18 to 65 with physical disabilities and/or complex neurological conditions, such as an acquired brain injury. As part of the Department's plan, the Department intends to strategically review the overall provision of respite care on the Island by undertaking a gap analysis later this year.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Ashford.

Mr Ashford: Thank you very much, Mr President; and can I thank the Minister for that very comprehensive Answer.

Can I start by welcoming the proposals for Radcliffe Villas, (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) and can I thank the Minister for his engagement over that topic as well, with Members. it is a very important development and very welcome.

Can I ask the Minister, I know there is going to be engagement coming up, but are there currently any provisional calculations and what assessment has been undertaken around what the future demand might actually look like? Has there been any of that work undertaken? I know there was some work planned pre-pandemic, but as with everything it got put on hold, and I was wondering if that piece of work has been picked up again?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you very much, Mr President.

No, that is the gap analysis I referenced in my Answer. It is in the Department plan to pick up that piece of work and make sure we understand what the need is across the Island, and then from that we will build a strategic case to roll out, hopefully, increased respite provision around the Island geographically.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Ashford.

Mr Ashford: Thank you, Mr President.

Can I ask the Minister – and he may not have this to hand and if not, would he be willing to circulate it? But I was wondering on how many occasions, say over the last 12 months, that demand for respite has actually outstripped supply? Because I am aware of cases in the past where people have tried to access respite facilities for, say, their disabled child, and they have been unable to do so because the actual supply has not been there.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you very much, Mr President.

I do not have those figures with me. I am not going to offer to circulate that because I think my expectation is exactly the same as Hon. Member's, that it will be every month for the last 12 months that will have happened. As I said in my original Answer, respite care for young people with a disability is currently very stretched because of the particular needs of some of the current

residents, the current children that are receiving care in the Ramsey centre. That is hopefully an issue that will be resolved as additional resources are sought to deal with it.

So as much as I would love to go and ask Manx Care to go away and do the work on that, I think it would be quite pointless because we already know what the answer is: that we do need more respite on the Island, which is why we need to undertake this analysis to understand just how big the gap really is before we can then go out and talk about commissioning additional space, additional respite care to meet that demand.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Wannenburgh.

Mr Wannenburgh: Thank you, Mr President.

The Chief Executive of Manx Care has told me that the provision of respite healthcare for children is not a priority. Could the Minister tell me when it will become one and what needs to happen for it to become one?

Thank you.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you very much, Mr President.

Manx Care's priorities are determined by the mandate. That was the reason I brought the three-year proposals for a mandate to this Hon. Court for a debate, to understand what Members' priorities were. It came through very clearly from that around a range of children's services. Children's respite care did not come out in that debate as being a need for a priority but, like I said, the Department has already established that respite care is a priority for us, irrespective of the views that were or were not expressed during that debate. It is going to be looked at as part of our Island Plan, our Department plan that will be published in due course.

The President: Supplementary, Mrs Sharpe.

Mrs Sharpe: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

Can the Minister confirm whether this gap analysis which he is talking about, is also going to look at numbers of staff for respite facilities? Because I understand that it is not just the bricks and mortar that we need, it is not just bigger respite facilities, we also need the staff to work in them. How is he going to attract staff?

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you very much, Mr President.

I am not going to broaden this answer out to talk about staff. We have two wonderful Questions coming up where we can explore that in detail. But, yes, in simple terms, a gap analysis will have to look at demand, but also then how we meet that demand.

When Manx Care talk about beds, they talk about staffed beds, they are not really talking about the physical location, they are talking about making sure those facilities are properly staffed at the same time.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Ashford.

Mr Ashford: Thank you, Mr President.

A nice easy question hopefully, and hopefully the answer will be a yes. Would the Minister agree with me that when it comes to talking about respite care – and we know from his original Answer because he laid it out in quite a bit of detail – a lot of the focus can sometimes be on

respite for older people? In fact, actually, when he talks about things we all already know, most of the gap generally is around young people, and their parents and their families are the ones probably that need respite the most because they come under the most pressure. So will the Minister undertake that any needs analysis is very much focused on the young people and the potential gaps there rather than, as has sometimes happened in the past, where has been much more of a focus around the older generation rather than the needs of the younger generation?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

I am more than happy to confirm that that will definitely be part of the work. I think ensuring that we are meeting the needs of everybody is key, not focusing on any particular groups. So yes, the needs of younger people, their families and carers will all be taken into account.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Henderson.

Mr Henderson: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

Would the Shirveishagh give the Court some indication of how long this, what sounds like a hugely complicated gap analysis, will take to complete? And when will we see some additional respite beds for younger people?

Returning to the Hon. Member for North Douglas, Mr Wannenburgh's supplementary question, the issue may not have been raised in the debate that the Shirveishagh mentioned, but it has been raised here *now* in Tynwald Court. (**Mr Wannenburgh:** Hear, hear.) Would he agree and undertake to take that point away and build it into this issue that has been raised here this morning?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you very much.

The Department Plan indicates at the moment a date of February 2023 to have that work completed, that is only an indicative date at this stage, obviously the plan has not come to this Hon. Court.

In terms of prioritising, unfortunately it is not really possible to build a long-term strategic plan if your priorities are constantly shifting as a result of individual questions. That was the purpose of bringing the mandate debate *here*, to try and get a more holistic view as to what Tynwald felt was important from Tynwald's perspective. Otherwise, I am not sure how you give Manx Care that strategic steer, if every single week something else is coming up as a new priority that has to absolutely be dealt with as a priority. The question will always be, what then do you de-prioritise as a result? It needs to be looked at in a much bigger piece than simply on an issue-by-issue basis.

But I would like to reassure the Hon. Member of Council and this Hon. Court, like I have already said, this issue is already encapsulated in our Department Plan. There is work already under way to start the process for how we are going to start solving the problem that we all know is there. It is not something that is going to fall by the wayside.

The President: Supplementary, Mrs Sharpe.

Mrs Sharpe: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

Will the Minister acknowledge the fact that the reason why Ramsey Respite Centre is clogged up at the moment is that there are young people living in there permanently as a result of the fact that we still do not have enough accommodation for children who are in care or care leavers?

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

Like I said in my original Answer, the reason the Ramsey Respite facility is currently unavailable is because we have young people in more permanent residence there. I am not going to go into any more detail about the circumstances of those cases.

14. Doctors and nurses at Noble's Hospital –
Number of full-time equivalents; expected establishment level; planned improvements

The Hon. Member for Rushen (Mr Speaker) to ask the Minister for Health and Social Care:

How many full-time equivalent (a) doctors and (b) nurses are in permanent employment within Noble's Hospital; what the expected establishment level is based on workforce planning and budget; what plans he has to improve the situation; and what his timetable is for doing so.

The President: We move on to Question 14, and I call on the Hon. Member for Rushen, Loayreyder.

The Speaker: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

I would like to ask the Minister for Health and Social Care how many full-time equivalent (a) doctors and (b) nurses are in permanent employment within Noble's Hospital; what the expected establishment level is based on workforce planning and budget; what plans he has to improve the situation; and what his timetable is for doing so?

The President: I call on the Shirveishagh, Minister for Health and Social Care, to reply.

The Minister for Health and Social Care (Mr Hooper): Thank you, Mr President.

Manx Care's structure is based on care groups, which aim to provide integrated care from combined hospital and community teams rather than specific locations. Whilst some individual services or posts may be identifiable as hospital based, it is not possible to run a report based on posts' or staff groups' physical locations, such as Noble's Hospital.

I can advise there are 240.66 budgeted full-time-equivalent posts for doctors, of which 169.29, or approximately 70%, are filled. There are 576.54 budgeted registered nurse posts, of which 439.33, or approximately 76%, are filled.

Workforce planning is a key work stream of the Health and Care Transformation Programme Workforce and Culture project. The project is currently in year two of a five-year delivery plan. There will be a systematic approach to undertaking workforce planning, the priority of which is determined by Manx Care. Currently, work is underway with theatres and maternity services. The project team are cognisant of the fact that there are some decisions to be made about what services are delivered by Manx Care in the future, and that this will impact on workforce planning. The project team are ensuring that close links are maintained with Manx Care's board and executive team, so the impact can be assessed and any changes to the approach agreed.

In 2022-23, Manx Care aim to recruit between 80 and 100 international registered nurses via a contract with GTEC, although it is important to acknowledge that many parts of the world are short of registered nurses and competition for these recruits will be intense. In 2023-24, Manx Care aim to recruit a further 100 international registered nurses via GTEC.

Manx Care are also committed to growing their own team. To this end, they have offered places to 28 Isle of Man residents to commence pre-registration nurse training on Island in September this year. Manx Care are also intending to adopt digital technology in delivery of

academic studies to help Manx Care increase further the number of trainees it can accommodate via Keyll Darree. In addition to work around registered nurses, Manx Care are also exploring international recruitment for midwives and are exploring ways midwifery trainees can access training and receive bursary support.

The President: Supplementary, Loayreyder.

The Speaker: Thank you.

I would like to thank the Minister for a very positive Answer to that Question.

There was, in there, talk about future service decisions and whether basically Noble's Hospital is going to be able to do what it does now long term into the future. What is the timetable for getting those sorts of decisions out of Manx Care in terms of planning going forward? I appreciate the growth in staff, but in terms of deciding what we will and will not be doing, those future service decisions, what is the timetable for that?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you very much, Mr President.

That is not a decision that is going to be driven by Manx Care, that is a decision that will be driven by the Transformation projects inside the Cabinet Office and the Transformation Board. Work on that is ongoing. I cannot remember off the top of my head what the deadline is, but I will double check that and I will circulate the answer.

The President: Supplementary, Loayreyder.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The 28 nurses that are being trained on Island, that is obviously another really positive move in terms of bringing people through locally into really good jobs without them having to go off Island to train. Does 28 represent the capacity – the absolute maximum capacity – for Manx Care and the Department for on-Island training, or is there further scope there down the line?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

My understanding is that does represent capacity at present. Manx Care are working on other mechanisms to see, actually, can we increase that capacity quite substantially to offer more training places to on-Island residents to try and encourage more people to take up nurse training on Island.

The President: Supplementary, Loayreyder.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Can I just ask also what the Minister is doing about making sure that staff are retained because, as we all know, quite a lot of people have left the profession? Manx Care has come from a difficult place in recent weeks, months and even years in this area. In terms of that building morale, in terms of maintaining the current staff, what is the Minister's master plan for that one?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

Again, that is part of the Workforce and Culture piece of work that is being undertaken by Transformation to see what can be done, so as well as training new registered nurses and new

staff, to see actually how can we encourage staff we already have to maybe retrain and expand what they do or even just to retain them in their current roles.

15. Noble's Hospital staffing levels –
Occasions Nursing and Midwifery Council levels not met; plans to improve

The Hon. Member for Rushen (Mr Speaker) to ask the Minister for Health and Social Care:

On how many occasions during 2022 Noble's Hospital has been unable to fully meet safe staffing levels as issued by the Nursing and Midwifery Council; what plans he has to improve the situation; and what his timetable is for doing so.

The President: We move to Question 15, and I call on the Hon. Member for Rushen. Loayreyder.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Again, I would like to ask the Minister for Health and Social Care on how many occasions during 2022 Noble's Hospital has been unable to fully meet safe staffing levels as issued by the Nursing and Midwifery Council; what plans he has to improve the situation; and what his timetable is for doing so, please?

The President: I call on the Shirveishagh, Minister for Health and Social Care to reply.

The Minister for Health and Social Care (Mr Hooper): Thank you, Mr President.

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) is a professional regulator and does not issue safe staffing levels, and therefore I am not able to answer the Question being asked as there are no such NMC safe staffing levels to compare Manx Care staffing against. However, to try and assist Hon. Members, I am able to advise that Manx Care would view any instance where staffing levels are lower than planned, as being potentially unsafe. Where this occurs, Manx Care takes action to minimise adverse impact on patient care as far as is reasonably possible.

Land-registered nurse staffing levels are determined using a recognised acuity and dependency tool accounting for the level of bed occupancy and workload in the clinical area, and use the Safer Nursing Care Tool developed by NICE and the NHS National Policy Board to inform establishment requirements for each acute inpatient ward. This was last updated in November 2021.

Manx Care monitor nurse-to-patient ratios at least three times a day to assess safety of staffing, and monitor *actual* registered staffing hours against *planned* registered nurse staffing hours on a monthly basis to give assurance of safer staffing levels. Actual registered nurse staffing hours have been lower than planned for every month in 2022 for at least some clinical areas.

Being short of staff does not necessarily mean staffing is unsafe. Staffing contingencies are used to mitigate risks with unknown shortages of staff, for short-notice absences and in the event of a surge in demand for care. These contingencies help to mitigate potential harm for service users and include: proactive electronic rota planning and leave planning, aiming for roughly six-to-eight weeks in advance; judicious use of bank and agency shifts to cover identified gaps in rotas; redeployment of registered nurses on a shift-by-shift basis to minimise safety risks across the service – this means staff moving between wards and clinical areas to stabilise rotas; redeployment of non-ward-based registered nurses where possible to provide cover during critical shortage – many colleagues have been allocating time to provide cover. As a last resort, Manx Care will look to reduce bed capacity, if possible, to help concentrate staffing at levels which can support patient need. This would mean closing beds or wards for a period of time to stabilise staffing deficits.

Always, though, professional judgement is applied from senior nurses, which usually involves accepting a level of risk in order to maintain a core service.

In respect of plans to improve the situation, I think I have already outlined recruitment and training plans in answer to the last Question.

The President: Supplementary, Loayreyder.

The Speaker: Thank you.

So is the Minister therefore confident that there has never been a time when patient safety has been put at risk due to unsafe low levels of staff? And in terms of the knock-on effects of some of the things that the Minister has said about closing wards or stopping other services, I presume that there is a level of impact assessment around that within Manx Care. To what extent is that reported to him directly as Minister in terms of making sure that a safe and viable service is actually happening up at Noble's Hospital on a day-to-day basis?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you very much, Mr President.

I did confirm in the original Answer that actually there is always a level of risk associated with accepting staffing levels in order to maintain a core service. That is a professional judgement applied by senior staff on the ground, not by the Department.

In terms of what the Department is made aware of, obviously we are in regular contact with Manx Care. They do keep our Quality and Safety Team advised of potential issues – especially around COVID-related issues, for example, in terms of pressure on the Hospital – but that is monitored then by our Q&S Team as part of our regular monitoring processes. There is not something separate that we do above and beyond our normal assurance work.

The President: Supplementary, Loayreyder.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Given the significance of the shortage – we are talking about almost a quarter of vacancies being unfilled within nursing staff and 30% with doctors – is the Minister actually considering having a conversation with Manx Care about suspending any service lines to ensure that there is resilience elsewhere in the Hospital and in the wider Health Service?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

No, I am not. Manx Care are managing through the contingencies that I have already identified in terms of what they are able to do, providing services safely. I think Manx Care are managing that relatively well, evidenced by the fact that we are not seeing widespread closures of wards, beds or services across the piece. So to my mind that is a very operational matter that – at the moment at least – I am happy to leave Manx Care manage, seeing as it is not seeming to develop problems for us on the outside.

INFRASTRUCTURE

16. Landlord Registration (Private Housing) Act 2021 – Implementation progress

The Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew (Mr Moorhouse) to ask the Minister for Infrastructure:

What progress has been made towards implementation of the Landlord Registration (Private Housing) Act 2021.

The President: We move on to Question 16. I call on the Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President.

I would like to ask the Minister for Infrastructure what progress has been made towards the implementation of the Landlord Registration (Private Housing) Act 2021?

The President: I call on the Shirveishagh, Minister for Infrastructure, to reply.

The Minister for Infrastructure (Mr Thomas): Thank you, Mr President.

The package of measures to implement this Act includes: minimum standards, tribunal rules and an occupancy deposit scheme – each of which is reflected within the Housing and Communities Board's 2022-23 Action Plan and the Department of Infrastructure's work stack.

It is the intention to develop an occupancy deposit scheme this year and to have consulted upon the minimum standards within the same timeframe. This involves as wide an engagement as possible and will include focus groups.

I look forward to updating Hon. Members in due course.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President; and thank you, Minister.

I am rather concerned that the former Minister gave a very similar Answer, almost word-for-word, in December 2021. He spoke about things taking place in the New Year and you are talking now about before the end of the year. It seems to be pushing out further and further and further.

Is there any definite place that we can say 'This will happen' before? I recognise that we are coming to the end of the parliamentary year, but there is a lot of concern out there.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: The Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

I am not sure the former Minister *can* have given the same Answer because this Answer had clear reference to actual work streams in the Housing and Communities Board 2022-23 Action Plan, which was not published until after the date that the questioner answered.

The work streams that were identified in that Housing and Communities work stream and the Department of Infrastructure work stack around minimum standards, occupancy and deposit scheme and tribunal rules are now started and being taken forward for completion.

I have no reason at this moment to expect them not to be completed in the timeframe identified in that document.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President; and thank you, Minister, for that clarification.

In terms of the workstream moving forward are landlords actually aware of these clear changes that the Minister refers to? There seems to be a lot of uncertainty in the sector; a lot of people are deciding whether it is worth staying in the sector.

Has the Minister any indication of how many landlords actually sold up, just through fear and exhaustion about waiting to see the final results?

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

I have been doing everything I can to make sure that landlords and also tenants know where we are and know that the apparent fear of minimum standards and the alleged discussions behind closed doors are just myths in the latter case; and in terms of the fear that is something that needs to be explored further, as far as consultations go onwards.

To answer the specific questions that the the questioner asked. Between 2011 and 2021 according to census data, the percentage of private-tenanted properties increased from 16% to 18%. It went up, it did not go down. Secondly, there are landlords who are selling, but there are also properties in construction for tenanting. So one action of the Housing and Communities Board is to get inside those numbers more so that we can actually have policy based on evidence, and law and financing and practice based on evidence.

The President: Supplementary question, Ms Faragher.

Ms Faragher: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

Given the drive to attract external workers to the Island and retain those that we have, coupled with England's recent push to rapidly improve tenants' rights, does the Minister not envisage potential harms in the implementation delay as a gap grows between the standards in force here and the standards implemented in England and Wales?

Thank you.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Standards in what respect? Certainly, there are substantial differences between standards in some situations, but not in others. Certainly, as part of the consultation, that allegation will be explored further.

The crucial point is that the legislation has now got Royal Assent, but is not yet implemented because the regulations have not been made, so the level of standards that will be adopted in the Isle of Man has not yet been established. So this is all based on hearsay allegation.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Callister.

Mr Callister: Thank you, Mr President; and can I thank the Minister for his statement this morning.

Can I ask the Minister when the Members and, more importantly, landlords will have sight of the guidelines and the secondary legislation?

Can I also ask the Minister when he will give sight to the deposit scheme – how it will work and what engagement that will have with the landlords, and tenants as well who will have to use that scheme?

Can I also ask the Minister when was the last time the DoI *Minister* met with the Landlords Association and landlords in respect of this item?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: I have not met with the Manx Landlords Association. I do recall attending a public meeting that they organised. That was my last specific contact.

I think I do know every member of the Manx Landlords Association Committee and have regular correspondence live on the radio or on the telephone and so on. It is an important group, but does not necessarily represent everybody who is concerned in this space.

In terms of minimum standards and an occupancy deposit scheme, I have laid out very clearly that the whole process begins with consultancy focus groups and that will then lead to policy decisions, which will lead to drafting.

Hon. Members of this Court and the general public are encouraged to get involved with the engagement and then subsequently with consideration of the draft documents when they are produced, and the expectation is that they will be finalised in the middle of next year.

17. Airport closure on 16th June 2022 – Statement

The Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew (Mr Moorhouse) to ask the Minister for Infrastructure:

If he will make a statement on the closure of the Airport on 16th June 2022.

The President: We move on to Question 17, and I call on the Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: I would like to ask the Minister for Infrastructure if he will make a statement on the closure of the Airport on 16th June 2022?

Thank you.

The President: I call on the Shirveishagh, the Minister for Infrastructure, to reply.

The Minister for Infrastructure (Mr Thomas): Thank you very much, Mr President.

A security incident was declared at the Isle of Man Airport on the morning of the 16th at approximately 6.10 a.m. The nature of the incident led to the evacuation of the Airport. Security and emergency protocols were put in place and the Isle of Man Constabulary led a multi-agency response to the incident. After an assessment of the risk, the incident was declared over later that morning at approximately 10.10 a.m. Airport security staff followed their internal procedures to allow the Airport to re-open at approximately 11 a.m.

Due to the nature of the incident and the sensitivity in relation to security matters, I hope that the Hon. Member will understand that I cannot give any further details at this time. However, I can confirm that all relevant agencies have taken part in a full debrief of the incident and a number of areas for future development have been identified in relation to training, processes, supervision of staff and communications.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President, and thank you, Minister.

I will try to keep that in mind. In terms of the controlled nature of the incident, why wasn't the main A5 road opened after 90 minutes? It appears to be a carefully managed situation and that possibility must have been considered.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: I hope the hon. questioner and the wider public understand that there is an executive review and I will make an announcement in terms of some learning from that executive review, which will start with the debrief, but it would be wrong in this place or anywhere else at this stage to get into operational detail of what happened in those hours of the emergency.

The President: Final supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President, and thank you, Minister.

In terms of that review, can actual consideration be made of the areas affected? Derbyhaven seemed to be a priority, whereas King William's College and Balthane seemed to be ignored in terms of the potential impact. Also, in terms of the cost, is that being paid for by the Airport itself or by some other area?

Thank you very much.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

I did make a commitment at the time that there would be this executive review, not a public review, not an inquiry or anything like that, just a debrief and then learning from the debrief, and that is what is going on. So measures that are likely to result will be determined by what risks are apparent in the Airport and in the wider area on a safety first basis.

Throughout any prolonged incident, a dynamic risk assessment approach has to be undertaken and measures that are appropriate according to that dynamic risk assessment. All that sort of thing will have been reviewed as part of the debrief of the operation of emergency procedures, and I can absolutely assure this Hon. Court and the wider public that I will work particularly with the Department of Home Affairs to make a statement in respect of an executive review of the debrief and the review of the emergency procedures and their implementation.

The President: I will allow one more. Supplementary, Mr Wannenburgh.

Mr Wannenburgh: Thank you, Mr President.

Could I ask the Minister, could the ongoing closure of the Airport on that day be due to a shortage of staff? Does the Minister agree with me that the chronic shortage of, specifically, air traffic control officers has come about as a consequence of the actions of the previous Airport Director and the former Chief Executive of the DoI, who swept these issues under the carpet and did not recruit the required number of trained controllers over the last 10 years?

Thank you.

The President: That is outside the scope but if the Minister wishes to comment.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

Indeed, the past and the future of air traffic control, and indeed the whole Airport, is something that is of fundamental, paramount importance to us all. For 30 years, off-Island travel has been an issue that is unfortunately listed most often by people as one of the top three things that are problematic with living on the Isle of Man. There are great things, but that is one of the issues that affects us and that is under review at the moment. But that is separate from this executive review of the incident.

The questioner has floated a hypothesis and I am absolutely sure that the debrief will have considered that hypothesis if it is at all relevant on a risk basis to what actually happened.

18. Bus Vannin minibus services –
Policy on provision

The Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew (Mr Moorhouse) to ask the Minister for Infrastructure:

What Bus Vannin's policy is on the provision of minibus services; whether drivers receive additional training for this; and what private hire services have been available from Bus Vannin since 1st April 2022.

The President: We move to Question 18. I call on the Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President.

I would like to ask the Minister for Infrastructure what Bus Vannin's policy is on the provision of minibus services; whether drivers receive additional training for this; and what private hire services have been available from Bus Vannin since 1st April 2022?

Thank you.

The President: I call on the Shirveishagh, Minister for Infrastructure, to reply.

The Minister for Infrastructure (Mr Thomas): Thank you, Mr President.

Currently minibus utilisation is based upon servicing requirements, including: patient transfer services, school and educational transport, the demand-responsive transport system operating in the north, Government staff transportation and a small number of more traditional bus services on lightly used routes. There seems no formal policy for this process.

Drivers are trained to fulfil their licence requirements and service delivery specific to the work they are doing. In addition to route familiarisation, the range of specialist training provided includes first aid, ferno chair, evac chairs, managing wheelchairs, manual handling, managing special additional needs and de-escalation training for health and education work.

Since 1st April 2022, and indeed prior to this date, private hire work has been accepted from a variety of sources based on driver and vehicle availability. I understand that private hire commissions are only accepted if there are trained driving staff and vehicles available for the date and time requested, and they meet a vital need in our community for larger-scale public transport. Vintage buses can also be provided for special occasions.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President, and thank you, Minister.

Just with regard to that final section, in terms of on-the-day bookings, will the Minister please go back and check that that is actually the case, because it has been suggested to me that people have received on-the-day bookings at a time when service buses have been cancelled due to staff shortages.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Yes, I hope the questioner and the member of public has been satisfied with all of the information that has been coming out from Bus Vannin in respect of driver availability, causes of driver inability and cancelled services. I do think that Bus Vannin is doing a great job to look at itself and to work out its future from bottom up, and I thank them for that. And when we get more into the private hire work, which is very much low down in the ranking of priorities, I am sure the Council of Ministers, and then after the Department has considered it fully, will make decisions about the future of Bus Vannin.

In terms of suggestions of use of buses, I do think we all ought to remember that we need evidence. So, for instance, I sit now looking at private hire buses picking up cruise passengers, but the common belief is that no private hire buses do pick up cruise passengers. So we do need to make sure we actually get the evidence in all of these situations rather than just the suggestions.

The most important thing is Bus Vannin, and the future of bus services in the Island is a top priority for all of us in the Department of Infrastructure, I think for everybody in this place and the wider public at the moment – pretty close to the Airport – and we are doing everything we can to make fundamental change over the next couple of months, if not weeks.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President, and thank you, Minister, for that reassuring answer. The gem being your support for Bus Vannin, which a lot will really see as being important.

In terms of the charging structure for the hiring of minibuses, is there actually a structure in place, because there seems to be a variance in terms of what people charge – I recently had a quote of £250 being given as a daily cost for a minibus hire. Is there a standard or is it something that does fluctuate in terms of what is happening within the company?

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

I will not take at face value any sort of published list, I will make sure that we take a sample month and look at the actual data when we come to make decisions about private hire in the future.

CABINET OFFICE

19. Free school meal recipients – Support during the summer holidays

The Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew (Mr Moorhouse) to ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office:

What support will be made available to families in receipt of free school meals during the 2022 summer holiday period.

The President: We now move on to Question 19. I call on the Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President.

I would like to ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what support will be made available to families in receipt of free school meals during the 2022 summer holiday period?

Thank you.

The President: I call on the Shirveishagh, Minister for the Cabinet Office to reply.

The Minister for the Cabinet Office (Ms Lord-Brennan): Thank you, Mr President; and I thank the Hon. Member for his Question.

The Cabinet Office has worked since the spring with the Department of Education, Sport and Culture in order to launch a pilot Holiday Activity and Food Scheme for the first time this summer. We have worked quickly to source funding, and have established governance and the necessary *vires* to offer that funding.

The programme's aim is to enable community-led provision during the school holidays in the summer. It is targeted at those young people in receipt of free school meals with the aim of providing nutritious meals and activities over the summer holiday period. The programme is funded via Soft Drinks Levy funding allocated to Public Health. Interested parties from community organisations were invited to make a bid from the fund. The funding enables access to activity schemes for free, in addition to food.

I am pleased, Mr President, to confirm that funding is being given to a number of organisations, including the Children's Centre, this summer. This will fund either new provision or increase access to existing summer holiday schemes. In addition, Soft Drinks Levy funding will also be provided to the Youth Service to offer an increased offering including food provision during the summer holiday. Children in receipt of free school meals can access these summer clubs for free. Promotion of this has already started, mainly through schools, working with head teachers, although organisations participating in this and running these schemes are also promoting it.

Mr President, I need to be clear that whilst I am pleased we have been able to lead the work to develop the community offering, this is a pilot scheme and it will need to be evaluated. It is not intended to be the main means of providing support to families on free school meals. This is and remains financial support through the Social Security Benefits System.

On the wider support, families in receipt of free school meals have received cash payments of up to £750 since April to help with the rising cost of living. This has been through direct and targeted financial support to families by way of Family Support Payments of up to £400 paid to families receiving Child Benefit, and the Energy Support Payments of £350 paid to those on income-related benefits responsible for housing costs.

The Treasury Minister has also confirmed in this place last month, in response to a Question from the Hon. Member for Onchan, that the Council of Ministers is actively considering what further support should be provided to individuals, and when.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President, and thank you, Minister.

I am slightly confused. On Friday afternoon the children break up for their summer holiday and the parents out there are questioning what has been said in terms of vouchers having been given previously. There has been an indication that something is happening, but what does this mean for a family in Castletown or a family in Kirk Michael?

Is there going to be national coverage? Where is this assistance going to be available? And are there going to be groups of children who do not qualify for this?

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: The Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

I do not think it has been signalled that there was going to be an intention to provide vouchers in the same way that was done in the previous summer period, which was at a time after COVID when people were not able to work, and that was really the basis behind the initiative for issuing vouchers. It will be through the schools and through the individual groups that this will be made available.

However, if people/parents in different parts of the Island want to make contact, either with their schools or with the appropriate contact for the Cabinet Office in this regard, then they can signpost where the schemes will be available. The resource and the applications have been considered in terms of the particular areas where there has been an indication from the community to meet the need, and also particularly through the Youth Services. So the span of that is geared up to cover the areas of most need.

But we will have to evaluate it to see what the take-up is and see how that works.

The President: Supplementary, Loayreyder.

The Speaker: Gura mie eu.

I have a few points to pick up from the Minister's Answer. The Public Health initiative required groups and individuals to have their proposals in by the end of June. Could I ask the Minister, how many groups have submitted an application for this pool of funding?

And could I pick up on the question from Mr Moorhouse about what is the geographic spread of those applications? Are they inside Douglas or are they all around the Island?

Can the Minister advise how many children *could* be catered for under the applications that have gone through, and how many children are on free school meals, so we could get – to use the earlier term – a 'gap analysis' as to what the capacity is compared to what is likely to be delivered?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

There have been four not-for-profit organisations who will receive funding as well as the Island's Youth Services to open up the scheme to more targeted areas of the Island. It is across the Island, it is not just in Douglas. In setting the applications it has been looked at in terms of the data as to the number of children on free school meals in a particular area, in addition to other factors such as looked-after children and also perhaps children that have English as a second language, to try and take that overall need and assessment of that.

Really, it is geared at both of those community organisations, and the Youth Service has been best placed to reach those young people most in need of support. It will not get to every child who has free school meals, and the tying-in of this with activities is purposeful because actually those people who may need this support, there is a lot of benefit that they can get from being involved in the activities, too.

I will have to circulate to the Hon. Member the point about the number who are on free school meals and the scope within the particular groups that can provide this. I would also have to see what has transpired in particular for those different areas, and circulate that further.

Clearly though, because it is a pilot scheme and because this is linking-in activities *and* food, it does have a bit of a focus on that where numbers do become a relevant factor in terms of how those community groups can deliver this. But these schemes have been developed elsewhere. I think it is definitely worthwhile trying this to see if there is a way to get that food provision activity to the children and it is definitely with the intention to get this out in the areas of the Island that need it. But Government needs help to deliver this. We can provide the funding but the community groups and also the Youth Services provide a key role in delivering that.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President.

I am really quite concerned that you have come to us this morning and you have not got clarity on the number of children involved and the number of children who could benefit from this. We have got some general information about four groups and the Youth Service, but in terms of the quality of what is actually happening from Friday this week onwards, there does not seem to be anything at all.

Is the Minister actually aware of what is happening next Monday morning; or will it *start* next Monday morning? In terms of the roll-out, how imminent is it? It all sounds to be very basic and still taking form.

I think a lot of parents, having seen the closing date for the call for help being 26th June, they have that expectation that something was going to happen. The Government has been very supportive there as you mentioned, and £6.3 million has been provided for local communities and local individuals, and we get to this point and a group with real need … it has not been overlooked, but it has not been given the clarity that they need. I think that is the concern. I feel if we could have more clarity on what was available more people would say, 'Thank you', rather than at the moment saying, 'What does this mean to me?'

So if she could give us a little bit more information on, 'What does this mean to me?' – but also, will it be expanded to those children not on free school meals who are actually requiring food over the summer holiday?

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

I will take the last point first. It has always been the intention of this scheme to look at addressing that gap for children who are on free school meals. It has never been the intention to look at the broader point that the hon. questioner raises, where he is indicating: what about people who are on free school meals? That has been the focus of this scheme.

As has been indicated in all the publicity and awareness around this, this is about organisations and individual groups and the provision that they can find, which is funded by Government. The advice I can give is that if parents or families want to find out what schemes are available to them soon in their particular area, they can email HAFenquiries@gov.im There is a dedicated email address and the team – both in Public Health and in Cabinet Office – who are looking at how this progresses, are very happy to stand by and advise people. In addition head teachers will be advising through the schools what is available, and also individual community groups will do that. The reason I mention this is because Government is not itself running a standardised scheme that goes across the board, so it will depend on what is available in individual communities. They may be running things for a certain period of time and that would be down to them.

This is backed by funding from the Sugar Levy Tax, which is allocated to Public Health. The policy has been developed by Cabinet Office and so we do rely on partners in the Education Department and community groups to roll this out.

I hope that clarifies for the Hon. Member how parents can find out what is available in their area, if they have not heard about it yet already through their school or individual community groups promoting it.

The President: Supplementary, Mrs Christian.

Mrs Christian: Thank you, Mr President.

Could the Minister clarify for the Court if there is enough budget for this programme if *all* free-school-meal children wanted to access the programme; and if not, how does that address the gap that she spoke of?

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: The Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

Because this ties in with activities and not just food provision, as has always been the purpose of this initiative, it is not going to be an easy thing to achieve to get this to everybody who is on free school meals. That has not been signalled as being the case. Free school meals and the previous voucher support is of course something that has come through the Department of Education, and this is something which is looking at addressing something that has *not* actually been addressed before by Government.

The point about holiday hunger and how you get to those families who are in need and are perhaps isolated in different parts of the Island and different communities, has not been addressed before. I think it is worthwhile to look at this, look at how it has worked and do not look at the negatives. Yes, there will be gaps, it is very difficult for everything to reach everybody, but we can learn through this. I spoke to an officer just yesterday who said, 'We want to be involved in the evaluation. We are listening to the groups who have said this is difficult.' And I have already said where we need to tweak this, we can. But the reality is we are not running something that is going to reach every child on free school meals. In fact, the free school meals matter itself is not designed to run through the school holidays.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Supplementary, Loayreyder.

The Speaker: Gura mie eu.

Whilst the Minister is circulating information, will she please include the cost of this scheme versus the cost of vouchers last summer?

Do not get me wrong, this does sound like a good initiative in terms of it is more holistic than just food, and if it works this is going to be great. I think this is just a matter of making sure that Members have some comfort because we are hearing about it, I think, for the first time today.

How is the Minister going to assess whether it has achieved its objectives in terms of making sure that too many do not fall between the cracks? It is going to be those who have the most chaotic lifestyles, who have the most difficult circumstances, who are going to be the least likely to go and fill in the forms to get their kids to these provisions. How is she going to be able to monitor that?

Will the Minister also confirm whether this is for the entirety of the summer holidays, because I think the call for applications talked about a minimum of four weeks. But are these all for the full six weeks of the school holidays?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

It is down to the individual groups and the Youth Services and their resources as to what they can deliver and manage. Government is not in a position to instruct those community groups to say, 'You *must* run this for the entire six weeks.' I think if we did this and over-stipulated rather than listening as to what tie-in would be possible, people would say 'We can't do this at all.' And in terms of the evaluation, I think part of it will also be about listening to the people who maybe did not decide to go forward in an application, as to what the barriers were in that.

In terms of how this is worked out and reaching those children in particular – this is why I was very happy actually when the Youth Services said, 'We're happy to get involved in expanding what the Youth Services do' – and supplementing what they offer, to offer food. Because actually it is quite often that those people who work in the Youth Services in fact are really providing almost like a social care role. They know from the ground which families need to be helped, and in some

cases they were helping people quite informally. So what we have done is we have backed it with funding. There is £90,000 allocated to this.

I think though that the actual roll-out of it is very tricky because it is reliant on other people. So I would expect any evaluation to take account of the community groups, how they felt with it, those people who maybe have not felt able to continue with an application; and actually now this is for the first time, I think we would be able to talk to organisations about how they might be able to partner together to deliver it in the future if there is a bit more time. I think that is the sort of reflection that will take place in quite a prompt way and then if it is worthwhile we can tweak that scheme. That is the basis that officers and DESC are working on and I know that community groups are working on it too. If it is worthwhile we can do it again, and if not then we would probably just … I do not know what we would have instead, but at least it is something. But it is different to the vouchers.

For those children who need food, they are probably also not the type of kids to go out and maybe get activities as well. So I think that this bottom-up approach, backing it with public funding with a policy that says, 'Let's help these communities' is the right way to go for that.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President; and thank you, Minister, for the information.

In terms of the £90,000, that is a really good starting point. And in terms of that budget, will all of that budget be used during this summer holiday? And in terms of any remaining funds, how will they be allocated?

Also in terms of going forward there are still slight issues in getting the link to this information. Could that be put out clearly in terms of allowing the media – and Google – and local people to get this information, because it is not quite as accessible as perhaps some of us would hope?

Thank you very much.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

There will be announcements soon, probably just to reiterate the previous points made about how parents can find out. But yes, it will be publicised.

I forget, if you can repeat the other two questions. I will answer them, but I just need a prompt.

Mr Moorhouse: Yes, just in terms of the £90,000 budget, will all that be used for this purpose in this summer holiday?

Thank you.

The President: Minister.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

This largely depends on the take-up of community groups and the Youth Services to deliver. If it was all used I would be very surprised to be honest. But I think it shows Government's commitments in the same way that Government has shown other commitments to addressing the cost of living for people. I think that is the right thing at the moment.

Oh, and to do with the promotion, I think that will be covered in the future.

Thank you.

The President: Supplementary, Ms Faragher.

Ms Faragher: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

I do welcome this scheme and the intention behind it and thank the Minister for all the information given today.

Could the Minister confirm, please, if the scheme will apply to children of secondary school age who receive free school meals?

Thank you.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

Where there are groups, including Youth Services, I think that will be the main one for older teens. Where they receive free school meals, they will be eligible.

Any remaining funding from this sugar tax allocation would probably still stay in Public Health, Mr Moorhouse mentioned that before and I am just taking the chance to answer that as well. Previously, that fund has been used for other health and well-being initiatives. I think it has also been used, for example, for the breastfeeding initiatives within Manx Care.

So I just want to say, if that money is not used for this scheme, I am quite sure it is going to be used for other worthwhile causes within Public Health and the well-being agenda.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Supplementary, Mrs Christian.

Mrs Christian: Thank you, Mr President.

Does the Minister agree with me – I am really glad that she is mentioning that it is an activity programme, and that crosses over to it being quite a social programme as well, and you have mentioned that. But do you agree with me that actually this is going to provide safety for children and for vulnerable children during this summer?

Could she also clarify if she has worked with the DHA Minister on this, because I know we have obviously got some high crime rates and things like that, and certain situations have happened certainly in my constituency over the last couple of weeks?

You talked about targeting young people and bringing them into these activities. Could you just elaborate a little bit more on that and how we can see the results of that?

Does she agree with me that there actually is going to be a benefit in the long term to this Government, because taking children and preventing them getting into crime will be a huge cost benefit to the Isle of Man in the future?

Thank you.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

I agree with the ethos that the Hon. Member, the questioner puts across. Absolutely. The remit for this scheme has definitely been about food and activities, but the point you make about it being social policy, it is. It is about addressing need in a social policy way. Clearly for those children that might fall between the gaps and not have that contact in communities, this might be a further way and a reason to reach them. It is on that basis that the activities are included.

I have not spoken to the Home Affairs Minister on this, but I think that the cross-departmental work has gone on between Cabinet Office and DESC and that has actually been appropriate. There has been a lot of back-and-forth and discussions with community groups and providers on this.

But I take the points that the Hon. Member raises. I do think there will be a long-term benefit, but it is a pilot so we need to see how it goes and then we will need to tweak it and see if it is worthwhile to change or do again in the future.

Thank you, Mr President.

The Minister: Supplementary, Mrs Corlett.

Mrs Corlett: Thank you, Mr President.

Firstly, I would like to thank the Minister for this proposal. I do support it and I appreciate, although it is a pilot, is it anticipated that there would be enough resource to actually provide this on the scale that would be required into the future?

The Minister talks about a gap analysis. This gap actually could be a mile wide. Does she have some assurance that there is funding available to provide the services that would be required in the future?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

I do not think I have raised the point about a gap analysis. I think that any future scheme would need to look at the funding available to see whether it is matching the ability to deliver, which is also … unless Government is actually doing this itself, which I do not think would work that well, because I think you need the on-the-ground community input. I think it is always going to rely on the ability to deliver, which would be down to those individual organisations.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Final supplementary, Mrs Poole-Wilson.

The Minister for Justice and Home Affairs (Mrs Poole-Wilson): Thank you, Mr President.

In reference to the point raised by the Hon. Member for Douglas South, Mrs Christian, does the Minister agree with me that this *is* a pilot? But I think, depending on how that pilot goes, there is obviously other work that happens across Government, including the Police Early Action Team and the LINK programme that reaches out to children who do find themselves on the edge of criminality, and looks to divert them and find activities and so on. Of course if the pilot is a success there may well be scope to look at how some of these initiatives can be joined up.

Thank you, Mr President.

A Member: Hear, hear.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

I agree with Mrs Poole-Wilson on this. I think that the Youth Services in particular have those sorts of partnerships. I think upon evaluation we might see how these other things can link in with future initiatives. It is very tricky, isn't it, because on one hand it is about food and on the other hand it is about broader social issues. But you are right in terms of looking at it in a cohesive way and joining up some of these things in the future.

Thank you, Mr President.

20. COVID-19 surveillance reports –
How much longer to be produced; positive results and case numbers; current guidance

The Hon. Member for Rushen (Mr Speaker) to ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office:

For how much longer COVID-19 surveillance reports will be produced; how accurately reported positive test results reflect numbers of cases in the community; and whether there is any change in guidance during the current spike in cases.

The President: We move on to Question 20 and I call on the Hon. Member for Rushen, the Loayreyder.

The Speaker: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

I would like to ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office for how much longer COVID-19 surveillance reports will be produced; how accurately reported positive test results reflect numbers of cases in the community; and whether there is any change in guidance during the current spike in cases?

The President: I call on the Shirveishagh, Minister for the Cabinet Office, to reply.

The Minister for the Cabinet Office (Ms Lord-Brennan): Thank you, Mr President.

The COVID-19 surveillance reports will continue throughout the summer and over the winter months. Subject to final determination, the plan may well expand the report to include additional surveillance to monitor the levels of other respiratory infections, particularly influenza and respiratory syncytial virus. Similar reports are published elsewhere in the UK.

It is intended that this fuller epidemiological surveillance report will give insight into wider issues affecting our population and potential impact on health services. This is part of the Public Health Winter Plan, which will feed in to work on the wider governmental Winter Plan.

The accuracy of surveillance is affected by changes in testing regimes, and this may need to be given further consideration. Levels of infection seen from testing are also always likely to be underestimates of the true level. However, triangulation of information via a range of surveillance methods is used to provide insight into levels of infection within the population.

During the most recent spike, there was no change to the core Public Health advice, but the intensity of messaging to the public was increased. Advice regarding hands, face, space and ventilation and encouraging of testing if displaying symptoms of COVID-19 remained appropriate mitigations and were reflected in the continued public messaging.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Supplementary, Loayreyder.

The Speaker: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

Is the Minister not concerned that we are perhaps in a little bit of danger of 'garbage in, garbage out' with these reports? In the post-TT outbreak, the official statistics were that there were 228 cases active, and I think that that is just orders of magnitude out from the experience on the ground and the experience of Hon. Members.

Would the Minister accept that they were just way away from reality in that particular timeframe; and with that in mind, will the Minister be giving up on these because they are just so inaccurate or is some effort going to be made in terms of improving the accuracy of reporting and making sure that people do actually report positive cases when they happen?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

I think unless we are going to get back to a point of legislating and mandating for this in legislative terms, we really are relying on people to decide to test, respond to the Public Health messaging and then report that in.

I think the broader endemic approach has been laid out. There are going to be times when there are more cases and less. It has gone down again more recently. So I think for now it is appropriate to stick to the current reporting and perhaps evaluate things in the winter, as indicated from Public Health would be the intention to do, with informing the Winter Plan. So I am content with that for now.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Supplementary, Loayreyder.

The Speaker: Gura mie eu.

I think the end of June, having official statistics saying there were only 228 was so far detached from the experience that was being lived. Where we did see a lot of Public Health advice was around the usual how to deal with the virus, which I think most people are comfortable with now, but what I did not hear an awful lot of was still that encouraging people to report it. It is a very simple process. It is online. I think it is a couple of tick boxes – when I went on it, when I had the luck of having COVID just after TT myself. It is not a complicated process, but we just need to reiterate that on social media (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) and the regular media so that these Public Health reports that are being distributed actually mean something. I think that is the challenge I put back to the Minister.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

I will take that point away to build into the other messaging around the other mitigation suggestions. It is a separate point so I am very happy to take that away.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Henderson.

Mr Henderson: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

Would the Shirveishagh agree with me that maybe it is now time to phase out reporting and put all the energies directed into Public Health information for continuation of the vaccination programme?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

I think that the Interim Director of Public Health and Public Health itself would take a view on the value of actually monitoring, and really that is for them to say and advise on.

I think the two things, the vaccination programme and the surveillance, they are two separate but interconnected things. So I think we would look for a steer really from Public Health as to whether it would be appropriate to not have those reports anymore or indeed, as has been indicated, the idea about maybe expanding them, which effectively would be done through looking for other illnesses. It would really be done through waste water testing and things like that.

We are perhaps going a little bit beyond the original point of the Question there, but I hope that helps the Hon. Member in terms of my thoughts on this.

Thank you, Mr President.

**21. Community infrastructure levy –
Progress**

The Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew (Mr Moorhouse) to ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office:

Whether the community infrastructure levy is still being progressed.

The President: We move on to Question 21. I call on the Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President.

I would like to ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office whether the community infrastructure levy is still being progressed?

The President: I call on the Shirveishagh, Minister for the Cabinet Office to reply.

The Minister for the Cabinet Office (Ms Lord-Brennan): Thank you, Mr President. I thank the Hon. Member for his Question.

The merits of introducing a community infrastructure levy are being looked at as part of a larger project on development viability. The importance of good viability evidence has been stressed to this Hon. Court previously and the Cabinet Office planning policy position stays the same: that in order to deliver a community infrastructure levy successfully, which requires specific regulations, and to reap the potential economic benefits for new or improved community infrastructure, which has been the intention behind including it in the Act, we must be able to have a defendable charging structure based on sound evidence – that is a little bit more complex than it might first appear.

Consultants were appointed in November 2021 to conduct viability testing of the Island Development Plan to determine acceptable levels of charges and contributions to be levied through a potential new community infrastructure levy or CIL. The specification also included looking at the existing planning contribution system, which is known more commonly as section 13 planning agreements.

The main point to answer – as far as I can today, I have to say, to the Hon. Member's Question – is that the report from the specialists appointed to carry out the work is due to be received by Cabinet Office at the end of August. It will need to then be considered and I would therefore propose to make a further statement on the full findings of the report in October Tynwald 2022.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President; and thank you, Minister, for that clarity.

In terms of going forward, it is good that you are actually looking at all the issues here. In terms of it remaining a possibility, given the issues in the wider housing market and all the other concerns that have been raised in the last few months, it really does need to be looked at with new eyes, and it is good that that information will be available. Hopefully that information will be available soon after you receive it and then we can go forward.

Thank you very much, Mr President.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President. *(Laughter)*

The President: Very good.

TREASURY

22. Asset value retainable when receiving financial support – Reassessment prior to 2023 Budget

The Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew (Mr Moorhouse) to ask the Minister for the Treasury:

Whether the value of the assets which a person can retain when receiving financial support from the Government will be reassessed ahead of the 2023 Budget.

The President: We move on to Question 22. I call on the Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President.

I would like to ask the Minister for the Treasury whether the value of the assets which a person can retain when receiving financial support from the Government will be reassessed ahead of the 2023 Budget?

The President: I call on the Shirveishagh, Minister for Treasury to reply.

The Minister for the Treasury (Dr Allinson): Thank you, Mr President.

Each autumn, as part of the annual benefits uprating exercise, Treasury considers whether the amount of capital which may be disregarded for income-related social security benefit purposes should be changed from the following April. This will form part of the budget considerations for 2023. Any increase in this amount would come at a cost and this would need to be considered alongside other competing issues.

Thank you.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President; and thank you, Minister.

I think one concern refers to the actual technicality, in terms of if you were to look at the 2016 social security income support documentation, you actually see that support is available, you have got the protection there, but if money is still owed, then that has got to be paid for in terms of the care provision. If that is the case, is there going to be ultimately no limit in terms of what will be protected?

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you very much, Mr President.

The regulations and the governance around this are quite clear. Obviously if the Hon. Member has a particular constituent who has come into a problem with this, I would be more than happy to take that forward. But as with previous questions from the Hon. Member, the benefits system, whilst it tries to be fair and simple, can be quite complicated in relation to individual circumstances and if people are in doubt in terms of their eligibility for support, or the issues with their existing assets, we would ask them to contact the benefits section to look into these in a bit more detail.

Thank you.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President; and thank you, Minister.

Whilst this current provision is fit for purpose, in terms of an area of concern, many people see it as being something that could be altered quite dramatically between now and the next election. Is that something that the Minister is minded to consider in terms of the current block of money that is now protected is relatively low, and some people would like that to be reconsidered? Is that something that is on the Department's radar?

Thank you very much.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you very much, Mr President.

Obviously the reach of assets can have quite significance in terms of whether people need short-term benefits or long-term benefits. I think the Hon. Member is probably mentioning in terms of long-term provision of Social Care and the drawdown on people's assets that that may have. Obviously it is one of the initiatives for the Health and Care Transformation Programme to look at the long-term funding of Social Care, see how that relates to the benefit process and then come forward with proposals to actually try to allay some of the fears that he is representing.

Thank you.

EDUCATION, SPORT AND CULTURE

23. Leaving engines running unnecessarily – Progress in policy for schools and where young people gather

The Hon. Member of the Council, Mr Henderson, to ask the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Further to the Answers given by her predecessor in Tynwald on 15th June 2021, what action has been taken to prevent unnecessary running of vehicle engines in schools and in other places where young people gather.

The President: We move on to Question 23. I call on the Hon. Member of Council, Mr Henderson.

Mr Henderson: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

I beg leave to ask the Shirveishagh Ynsee, further to Answers given by her predecessor in Tynwald on 15th June 2021, what action has been taken to prevent unnecessary running of vehicle engines in schools (**The Speaker:** In schools?) and in other places where young people gather?

The President: I call on the Shirveishagh, Minister for Education, Sport and Culture to reply.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture (Ms Edge): Thank you, Mr President.

The issue raised by the Hon. Member has been ongoing for a number of years and is not just isolated to schools and the Department of Education, Sport and Culture. As previously stated by my predecessor in June 2021, there is no Department policy specifically relating to leaving car engines running or idling and there is no plan for this. It is already an offence to leave the engine

of a vehicle running without cause. However, I will ensure that further communication is issued to the schools on this matter.

I have also been in discussions with the Minister for the Department of Infrastructure, and we are going to look at the possibility of installation of suitable signage at schools to encourage drivers to *not* leave their engines idling.

Thank you.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Henderson.

Mr Henderson: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

I thank the Shirveishagh Ynsee for her Answer; it is positive. However, could she give us a little more detail with regard to the fact that I am specifically, for the purpose of this Question, focusing on schools, not broadening it out. I am concentrating on our young lungs that are in our classrooms and around the school premises' areas.

Does the Minister realise that even today parents and others, delivery drivers and so on, will leave vehicles running near classrooms, with exhaust fumes pumping up the side of the buildings, filling up playgrounds and so on, and that we really do need to have some sort of … It does not have to be some sort of monster gap analysis, this is just a straightforward cascading down to all schools to advise head teachers – who are teaching our children about climate change and pollution – to inform and advise parents, not a big stick, but to switch engines off when it is not needed.

Would she also agree that we do need some signage outside and that I have sent her some signage already, issued by the likes of the RAC and other well-known organisations?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

Obviously schools, within their PSHE and citizenship schemes do discuss all of the issues around climate change. But with regard to the DESC staff being responsible for enforcement of this, clearly we all know the challenges we have got currently with our staffing, but I do think that installation of signage will go a long way to supporting what the Hon. Member is looking for.

I may even look, with the Minister for DoI, that perhaps we do involve the children in looking at how we can make that signage an item that they recognise and they will then take that message home to their parents. Maybe I will have a competition in the autumn and see what we can do to make sure that signage is appropriate and that people will hopefully adhere to it.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Henderson.

Mr Henderson: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane; and I thank the Shirveishagh Ynsee again for the positive answer.

Could she just recognise for me that in fact I am not wanting an enforcement and I am not wanting a big stick? What I am wanting is enlightenment, so that information trickles out into people's thinking, to actually change habits that we have become so used to, that it gets parents and others, delivery drivers, thinking about what they are doing and to voluntarily turn their engines off?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President, and obviously I thank the Hon. Member for that.

None of us really want to be round our schools with big sticks, *(Laughter)* but I do think the message is key and the more we can make that pronounced around our school settings and ensure

and encourage, and obviously our head teachers will enforce that within their schools. We will request that as soon as schools are back in September.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Thomas.

The Minister for Infrastructure (Mr Thomas): Thank you, Mr President.

Does the Minister agree with me that this is a really welcome intervention and that enlightenment, as the questioner called it, is very important?

Does the Minister also agree, though, that there are some vehicles that actually need to keep their engines running, for things like *(Interjection by Mr Henderson)* not draining batteries when vehicle lifts are going? So therefore, it would be quite important, as part of the enlightenment, to have places away from the school and away from children to enable vehicles that do need to have their engines running so the batteries are not drained are also included in that enlightenment?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

Yes, the Hon. Minister for DoI is correct. It does depend on the vehicles that people are driving, but the key message will be that we need to make sure this is a more joined-up approach and hopefully work with the Department of Infrastructure to put this signage in place and hopefully then encourage people to adhere to the policy.

Mr Henderson: Hear, hear.

24. Laptops and iPads in schools – Sufficient numbers; provision and renewal policy

The Hon. Member for Rushen (Dr Haywood) to ask the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Whether she considers that there are sufficient laptops or iPads in her Department's primary schools; and what her Department's policy is on the provision and renewal of laptops and iPads in its primary schools.

The President: We move on to Question 24. I call on the Hon. Member for Rushen, Dr Haywood.

Dr Haywood: Thank you, Mr President.

I should like to ask the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture, whether she considers that there are sufficient laptops or iPads in her Department's primary schools; and what her Department's policy is on the provision and renewal of laptops and iPads in its primary schools?

The President: I call on the Shirveishagh, the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture, to reply.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture (Ms Edge): Thank you, Mr President.

The current resourcing situation in primary schools has been arrived at using a pupil-to-device ratio for iPads and the schools largest class sizes as an indicator of how many laptops to deploy to each school. This is adjusted for large schools with two or three form entry and schools on split sites. This arrangement has been in place for several years and was agreed by school leaders in collaboration with officers within the Department's central team.

As a result of the digital work undertaken this year, which looked at the hardware platform and curriculum, the Department plans to now review the type and quantity of pupil devices in school to ascertain whether their provision needs to be increased or changed. In the meantime, if a school requires access to alternative devices a request should be made to the Department for consideration. Some schools have raised funds individually to purchase additional devices and some have chosen desktop computers in addition to the laptops and iPads supplied for pupil use.

Thank you.

The President: Supplementary, Dr Haywood.

Dr Haywood: Thank you.

Data previously provided by the Hon. Member in Answer to a Written Question indicates that there are 15 out of 32 primary schools – that is nearly half our schools – where the total number of laptops available to support learning is lower than the largest class size within the school. I shall not name the schools. It actually does not matter whether you are one short or whether you are 15 short, like some schools are. The consequence is that teachers have to plan their lessons so that resources are shared and that hampers the development of individuals in schools. What is worse is that there are four schools that do not have a class set of iPads and they are also schools that do not have a full set of laptops either. So that gives the teachers of those large classes no opportunity to develop children's IT skills.

Does the Minister recognise that provision of up-to-date functioning IT equipment is important to support learning within our schools and that lack of such equipment is going to reduce learning opportunities?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

I am sure the Hon. Member is aware that all of our IT equipment in schools is managed and comes from the Government Technology Services. A review takes place at the beginning of each academic year with the aim of redistributing devices to ensure equitable provision across all primary schools and this is based on, as I said in my Answer, the number of pupils and the largest class sizes.

As with all areas of the curriculum, schools have the freedom to diversify and enhance any area of the curriculum they choose. Some schools have taken the choice to use some of their budget to increase the number of devices, for example, running specific projects for Year 6 students where more devices are needed.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Supplementary, Dr Haywood.

Dr Haywood: Thank you, Mr President.

In the earlier Answer, the Minister indicated that devices had been bought by some schools from their own funds and actually some schools have used parent-raised funds to buy those devices. How is that compatible with her Department's stated aim of redistributing those devices between schools, and does that mean that parents are working towards something for their children that is then taken away from them?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

As I have said, with regard to our schools they have the freedom to enhance the curriculum and whether that is with digital devices or in any way, we give that freedom to … policy to our

schools. Obviously, with us moving into more of a digital age, this is something that we need to work with Government Technology Services to make sure that we have the most up-to-date, appropriate equipment in our schools for the curriculum and for the future education provision for all.

The President: Supplementary, Loayreyder.

The Speaker: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

Can I ask the Minister what her policy is on access? If devices are needing to be shared in some classes and some places just cannot get access to them one per pupil, then what is the Minister's policy about individual pupils being able to access IT devices?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

Again, obviously access, our teachers are best placed to know the requirements within their school, and I know that school classes do share and they will make sure whatever their activity is that they have got adequate equipment if it is for IT. Do I think that there is currently enough funding? As we are all aware in this Hon. Court, there is a funding review taking place for the Department of Education by the Cabinet Office, and I am hopeful when that review is concluded that we do have a full baseline budget provision for appropriate educational resources.

The President: Supplementary, Dr Haywood.

Dr Haywood: Thank you.

I will have two more stabs at this, if I might. One is what is the policy on IT provision for primary school children and the ratio of those? This is a bit akin to saying how many slates and pencils do they have or how many exercise books do they have?

The second is what is the policy on redistributing devices, and does it exclude those that have been bought by the school from their funds from being included in that redistribution? Otherwise it sounds a bit like communism with computers. *(Laughter)*

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Apologies, Mr President, I did not hear the first part of that question; I only caught the second.

Dr Haywood: What is the policy on the provision of IT equipment for primary school children?

The Minister: As I have stated in my previous answer, the aim is to distribute the devices to ensure equitable provision across our primary schools. If a school has had the funding from a charity or from parents I would not expect the school to lose that resource.

ENTERPRISE

25. West Atlantic Aviation Maintenance – Job losses

The Hon. Member for Middle (Mr Peters) to ask the Minister for Enterprise:

How many jobs are to be lost at West Atlantic Aviation Maintenance, and when, and why; how many jobs will remain; and if he will make a statement.

The President: We move on to Question 25, and I call on the Hon. Member for Middle, Mr Peters.

Mr Peters: Thank you, Mr President.

I would like to ask the hard-working Member for Enterprise *(Laughter)* how many jobs are to be lost at West Atlantic Aviation Maintenance, and when, and why; how many jobs will remain and; if he will make a statement?

The President: I call on the Member for Enterprise, Mr Johnston, to reply.

A Member of the Department for Enterprise (Mr Johnston): Thank you, Mr President and I thank the Hon. Member for his Question; and, of course, it is always disappointing to hear of potential redundancies with any local business. It will be, of course, a very worrying time for those employees and their families.

The Department has engaged with the company throughout the current situation and has offered to provide assistance to both the business and affected employees. Ultimately, this is a business decision arising from a change in strategic direction and whilst the Department has made it clear it can consider a number of options in terms of support, as the Department understands, the reduction in operation remains planned to proceed.

Whilst it would not be appropriate for me to discuss specific details of the local workers impacted or the business itself, the broader engineering sector on the Island remains strong and has a number of live employment opportunities. And Members will be aware of the current levels of vacancies within other sectors of the economy.

The Department, and colleagues within Treasury, will continue to support individuals who wish to secure alternative employment that may be ultimately affected here or with any other business.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Peters.

Mr Peters: Thank you, Mr President, and thank you to the Member for Enterprise for answering that.

I am led to believe that something like 11 of 13 jobs are going to disappear at that site. I also believe that West Atlantic renewed the lease on their hangar shortly prior to announcing their effective relocation elsewhere, thus preventing it being used by anyone else. Does the Department agree that this potentially anti-competitive practice should be fully investigated and the hangar made available to other suitable tenants?

Thank you, sir.

The President: Member to reply.

Mr Johnston: Thank you, Mr President. Thank you for the question.

Yes, the hangar is on a lease, I am aware of that. All I can say on this, my limited information I have, is there are ongoing discussions on the situation over the lease and really I cannot add any

more at this stage. The decision is very much based on the fact that the aircraft that they are servicing are obsolete, are becoming obsolete, and therefore the practice is moving off Island. So we are where we are. There is an agreement in place, so there will be negotiations going forward to try and resolve the situation. I cannot really add any more at this stage.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President.

Just extending that, in terms of the availability of the hangar, competition, other providers have considered making use of it, but there appears to be an issue in terms of the cost structure. Could that also be looked at? It is really a priority that we do try and keep this sector going. Not long ago, Manx Airlines had lots of apprenticeships in this area, and we would like to see that come back.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Minister to reply – or Member.

Mr Johnston: Thank you, Mr President.

Yes, hard to respond to that other than to say that, as I said, as an industry, there are great opportunities elsewhere within engineering and manufacturing on the Island, so I am very confident that those individuals who have been affected will find alternatives. And in the process of the negotiations on the lease, I am aware there are works to be done on the hangar and I hope we get to a situation when it becomes available again for another business to move forward.

The President: Supplementary, Mrs Christian.

Mrs Christian: Thank you, Mr President.

Is the DfE aware that after five decades all aircraft heavy maintenance will cease in the Isle of Man? And would the Hon. Member consider to come back to report to this Hon. Court what plans on how this essential part of infrastructure can be regained in the future?

Thank you.

The President: Member to reply.

Mr Johnston: Thank you, Mr President; and I thank the Hon. Member for her question.

I think ultimately this is a business decision and the important thing is, going forward, as a Government, as the Department, that we make sure we are laying the foundations so that businesses can come to the Island and be attracted to the Island and thrive. There is a whole range of issues there to make that happen, whether it is talking about employment legislation … all the issues we are talking about.

So as I said, we have got a very positive, very healthy engineering and manufacturing sector on the Island. It has come under challenge. You mentioned aviation; that is a big issue. With COVID we have seen real challenges and one of the things the Department is trying to do, in working with businesses, is to look at how they can diversify, move into different areas, to make sure that they are viable. That is an ongoing process and will continue.

The President: Supplementary, Dr Allinson.

The Minister for the Treasury (Dr Allinson): Thank you very much, Mr President. I would like to thank the Hon. Member for his answers.

Would he agree with me that leasing of public-owned assets has to provide good value to the taxpayer and a decent return, but at the same time his Department is actively looking at how to

support a sector that has undergone quite seismic changes over the last two years, and will continue to do so, both in terms of employment on the Island, but also training and apprenticeships, as he has already commented on?

Thank you.

The President: Member to reply.

Mr Johnston: Thank you, Mr President, and may I thank the Hon. Member for his comments.

I fully agree with what he is saying. That is an important role now for the Business Agency and for Enterprise in general: to make sure that we are helping businesses to be match fit. And that is a case of not just looking at new opportunities and new businesses, which is very important, but also making sure existing businesses are taking a hard look at themselves and making sure that they are doing the right things, and wherever the Government, where the Department can help with that, (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) that is something we will continue to engage with.

Thank you.

Procedural –
Questions to be completed after Order Paper is completed

The President: Now, Hon. Members, that concludes Question 25, obviously we are coming up to our lunch break, and I have a request from Mrs Christian.

Mrs Christian: Thank you.

Mr President, I would like to ask the Hon. Court if they would agree to continue with the remaining Questions after the completion of the order of the business on the Order Paper.

Thank you, Mr President. Second? *(Interjection by Miss August-Hanson)*

The President: Second, Miss August-Hanson. Thank you; seconded.

Hon. Members, the request there is, under Standing Order 3.52, to sit and have the remaining Questions heard. *(Interjection by the Clerk)*

So the Question is: do Members wish to have Questions at the end of business, or would you like to have it …? Is that what you are asking? (**Mrs Christian:** Yes.) Okay, thank you very much.

So at this point, I will ask: all those in favour, please say aye; those against, please say no. The ayes have it. The ayes have it. Was a division called? No; thank you. So the ayes have it. The ayes have it.

Hon. Members, we will now break for lunch and we will resume at 2.30.

The Court adjourned at 1.06 p.m
and resumed its sitting at 2.30 p.m.

Announcement of Royal Assent –
Income Tax Act 2022

The President: Fastyr mie, Olteynyn Onnoroil.

Members: Fastyr mie, Eaghtyrane.

The President: Please be seated.

Hon. Members, I can announce that Royal Assent has today been given to the Income Tax Act 2022.

Order of the Day

3. Economic Strategy –
Statement by the Chief Minister

The President: As we rejoin our Order Paper at Item 3, I would like to advise Hon. Members that Item 4 is *not* to be moved.

So at Item 3, Economic Strategy and a Statement by the Chief Minister. I call on the Ard-shirveishagh, the Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister (Mr Cannan): Thank you, Mr President.

Just on a point of clarity on Item 4, actually the Statement is contained within this Statement in terms of clarification of future offshore energy.

Mr President, today marks a significant moment in the future of the Isle of Man's economy. Today we are releasing a comprehensive analysis and review of the Island's current economy, an evaluation of our future opportunities, and a draft road map to bring more prosperity and security to the people of the Isle of Man. In April 2021, we appointed KPMG as our partners to assess the current economic position of the Island and to advise on our future economic potential. After 15 months of work, discussions, analysis and consultation we are today publishing our draft Economic Strategy which sets out a vision for the Isle of Man to develop a strong and diverse economy which is sustainable, ambitious and built on firm foundations to provide economic success, rewarding career opportunities and prosperity which positively impacts *all* residents on the Isle of Man.

The Isle of Man has achieved a lot over the past few decades. Our exceptional financial services and digital sectors have created wealth, expertise and an economic performance that we should be proud of, supported by a hard-working domestic economy and supportive public services. We are also a safe and secure place to live and to do business. We have many successful, world-recognised companies here, and many of our residents are successful and able to enjoy a good quality of life – noting, of course, the rapidly increasing cost of living. However, the world is changing and our current economic trajectory should no longer be regarded as providing the Island with the longer-term safety and security needed to be confident in our future.

In line with other western nations, we are facing a demographic challenge, with an ageing population and longer life expectancy. Whilst these factors should of course be celebrated, they also present serious challenges to the sustainability of our essential public finances and the requirement to invest in public services. In addition, the Island is perhaps lacking the vibrancy, facilities and opportunities needed by our younger generations in terms of the environment and diversity of employment opportunities.

Mr President, the KPMG analysis shows that the Island's recent success has been driven by a small number of companies in two sectors – financial services and e-gaming – but that both growth sectors, as well as other key sectors of our economy, face various global and economic headwinds which will need to be overcome. These headwinds will come from regulation, innovation, sustainability, digitisation and global taxation. We are told that to maintain current levels of Government revenue to fund the public services required to support a good quality of life, it is critical that the Island creates a more dynamic business ecosystem supporting business scale-up, innovation and investment, which will drive business productivity and growth improvements, both in terms of GDP and employment.

The Island must also protect its existing sectors whilst remaining a regulatory-robust jurisdiction, help businesses to navigate headwinds, nurture the emerging success stories of tomorrow and develop new sectors, as there will be others that continue to mature over the next five to 10 years. Without focusing on this growth, the existing employment base could become less relevant to its global marketplace, leading to risks to employment and Government revenue. Simply put, carrying on managing from year to year in responding to the challenges I have highlighted and balancing our priorities, may lead us to unwittingly commit our economy to a status that some may regard as stagnant; or to put it more succinctly, an economy that is in effect one of managed decline.

Mr President, we must, I would suggest, find a way forward that gives us all confidence in our future. We should not be under any illusions that there are significant challenges facing our long-term sustainability; challenges that need to be met and dealt with now; challenges that we *cannot* allow to fester without now an appropriate response from the Government. That is why today, Mr President, we are bringing forward a firm, ambitious, targeted and strong response to the 600 or so pages of reports and analysis provided to us by our strategic partners. We are today setting out a series of economic aspirations and shifts which represent substantial commitments for our Government and indeed for our Island. At the heart of our proposed strategy being launched today, are four key policy pillars from which I expect we will develop associated policies and levers for us to meet our aspirations.

Pillar one is to grow our population to 100,000 people by 2037. This policy pillar is predominately charged with redressing our demographics and should be seen in context of development of relevant social policies to increase birth rates, support families and both retain and encourage Islanders to develop careers on the Island, as well as provide the framework for working-age employees and entrepreneurs to take up residence. Without generating an increased proportion of economically active people we are facing an increasingly unsustainable demographic structure whereby our dependent population will be costing the Island more than our working population can theoretically support.

Pillar two is to create a £10 billion economy by maximising our economic opportunities, developing and diversifying our business sectors and creating 5,000 new jobs on our Island by 2032. Our focus will be to adapt and modernise those sectors that enable Island life to function, such as retail, hospitality and energy; to protect, nurture and grow the key sectors that provide most of our international-facing jobs in digital, financial services and indeed the visitor economy; and to develop new sectors that are emerging and developing rapidly on a global scale. We also need to develop the infrastructure of the Island, while investing in the productivity of our businesses and workers, and exploring and facilitating innovation into new markets.

Pillar three is to create stronger public finances to enhance our public services and indeed deliver better public services for the people of this Island by increasing our public revenues by an additional £200 million above base by 2032. This will be achieved by growing the economically active population and also by maximising our revenue from opportunities that exist in our future energy strategy and from corporate revenues.

Pillar four is to place sustainability at the heart of the economy and specifically to ensure that by 2030 we have secured our future renewable energy supply and commitments. We will do this by putting our Climate Change Action Plan at the centre of our economic planning and that growth

of new industries supports our economic and climate-change goals. By setting out clear objectives for the decarbonisation of our economy, we will signal strongly to both business and the community that the Island is a responsible place to locate and that we can support them sustainably into the future.

Mr President, these four key policy pillars will provide us with the guidance and direction needed for us to take the Island forward in line with the vision that this Government has already set out in the Island Plan. There will be a need to refine and merge that plan in due course and of course underpinning the four policy pillars, there is now a need to build out our related policies to deliver on our overarching ambitions.

Making these things happen will not be easy; it will require a number of crucial changes within Government and indeed in how we interact as an Island. We need to look beyond year-to-year plans and have a sustained commitment to the medium and long term with measurable results and accountability. We need to have a sustained commitment to economic policy, ensuring that we more strongly appraise economic value alongside social and environmental cases for projects and policy in a systematic way. We must be joined up as Government, yet also take responsibility within Departments for the delivery of this Strategy and be efficient in everything that Government stands for. And ultimately, we must ensure that we make best use of private-sector investment, effectively leveraging it for the benefit of all of us.

The key to success is to ensure that we enable the private sector to succeed and to invest; and indeed our ambition is to have a £1 billion long-term public and private investment programme, supported by an initial £100 million Economic Strategy Fund to help stimulate economic shifts and develop supporting initiatives.

Mr President, I fully appreciate that there will be a lot of questions about the detail – the how, the when, and the where. Today we are publishing a draft, high-level strategy based on a large body of research and discussion, but of course there is a large amount of further exploration and research to be done. Some of this is already under way and other areas will be ramping up in the following weeks and months alongside public consultation.

As part of the Island Plan we have set out a broad range of initiatives, some of which will directly support the ambitions within the Economic Strategy. There will be a number of sub-strategies brought forward to address some of the key challenges. Amongst these there will be a Workforce and Skills Strategy, our Childcare Strategy, our Healthcare Transformation Plans, our Educational Improvement Plans, our Climate Change Action Plans, and the Government will also be issuing a consultation on a new Offshore Energy Strategy over the summer. A key part of the Offshore Energy Strategy will relate to offshore wind development, and how we can achieve a potentially significant income stream from seabed-leasing for windfarm sites. The proposed strategy also covers the broader role of energy exports for our Island and how we can develop an integrated framework that enables us to sustainably manage and reap the benefits of our territorial seas.

Today, I will also be making a statement on the Built Environment Reform Programme – a clear commitment to drive improvement across the built environment and align planning policy and development to the Island Plan and the ambitions in the Economic Strategy. Each of these individual strategies or initiatives I have mentioned are important in their own right, and follow on from commitments in the Island Plan. But they cannot be taken forward in isolation. They need to be joined up.

The Economic Strategy is not just another strategy but is *the* strategy now which will help align all of our ambitions and importantly help fund the changes we want to make; and more importantly the changes we *need* to make. It gives us the overarching direction in which to aim, and the tools to select from.

Mr President, we have always prided ourselves on our ability to adapt, and as an Island we have so much to be proud of. But I would suggest we have reached a point in the economy where we must evolve again. We must not stand still while the world around us changes. We must not stand still while our public services continue to buckle under the pressures of an ageing

population. We must not stand still while our young people demand new job opportunities and attractive facilities. We must instead bring forward an ambitious and bold series of initiatives and policy changes that will ensure the future resilience, sustainability and prosperity of our people and our Island.

Today, I am setting out the framework for our future success. A population of 100,000 people engaged in a £10 billion economy delivering £200 million more Government revenues based on a sustainable programme and infrastructure for the future. The draft Economic Strategy will now be the subject of wide-reaching and engaging consultation over the summer and a key feature of the Government Conference scheduled for September, with an updated version brought back for debate in November this year.

I look forward to engaging with Members more broadly over the coming months.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Hon. Members, that is a Statement, we now open that up to questions and first up I have Mrs Christian.

Mrs Christian: Thank you, Mr President.

I thank the Chief Minister for his Statement. I apologise to him for not having had the time to speak to him regarding the briefings, during briefings, as I was not here. I obviously have lots of questions, but I am just going to start off with one. You have quoted that the workforce growth is 5,000 and the population growth will be 15,000. So are you saying that only 5,000, that would be a third of the 15,000, will be economically active and would that reduce our economically active percentage?

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

As I have said and indicated, there is a lot of detail that needs to be added and a lot of thought given to some of the specifics behind the policy. We are setting out to create 5,000 new jobs and whether those new jobs come from within the existing framework of industries that we have or whether they come from new industries is yet to be determined and ascertained. But I would suggest to the Hon. Member that a target of 5,000 new jobs will help us drive forward, in terms of increasing our working population and the contribution that they will bring. And, clearly, alongside that, one expects there to be additional family members coming to the Island and, of course, alongside that, we then need to determine what our potential immigration policies look like as well.

These discussions need to happen over the summer, they need to be on an ongoing basis and, Mr President, we will look forward to clarifying in much more detail the specifics in terms of the numbers base and what that means in terms of our overall demographics in due course. The important thing I think about today's announcement is it clearly sets out the four key pillars of the strategy and with it brings forward clear targets for the Government and, indeed, the Island to aim for when it comes to jobs, economic development and associated matters such as infrastructure and housing.

The President: I call on the Hon. Loayreyder.

The Speaker: Thank you, Eaghtyrane.

The Chief Minister has outlined an ambitious plan for the economy and that is going to mean an awful lot of work for Government in driving that. Is it his intention to grow the overall size of Government to deliver this, and, if so, by how much; and is the Department for Enterprise fit for purpose to deliver it?

Hopefully there will be no surprises in that question, Chief Minister!

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: Thank you.

If I start with the latter of those points first, we currently have a business model and I think when you come down to targets and accountability, part of the ethos and attractiveness of this developing a strategy like this is it does present clear targets. Some of those targets then need to be set out more in terms of GDP growth particularly, where that GDP growth is coming from, from specific sectors, and therefore what the targets of the Agencies are. I have already made out a public commitment to seek to enhance the role of the Agencies and seek to improve that, and I am sure the new Minister for the Department for Enterprise, when he or she is appointed, will be focusing on that clear commitment.

In terms of the size of Government, I think it is important to maintain Government efficiency and effectiveness, and, indeed, Government productivity, Mr President. I think we have already made that commitment. I expect further announcements this year, in line with the commitments already made about the size of Government and the SAVE report. I also would point out that we are undertaking a number of initiatives on the back of the Dr Rosalind Ranson case to highlight certain roles, leadership roles and also review, for example, the role and function of the Office of Human Resources and, alongside that, how they would be measuring things like productivity in Departments and also enabling people in Departments to succeed.

I think the other point to mention is that if you grow the population by another 15,000 people, then we will need more in the way of frontline services, such as doctors, nurses, teachers and other professionals who are effectively delivering on the frontline.

I think for this Government the mantra is all about delivery. That is what we are looking for and when looking at delivery one also needs to look at the efficiency and effectiveness behind it, and that needs to continue to be a mantra. We are, as it stands at the moment, looking to protect the staff numbers or at least balance the staff numbers through Treasury management of budgets. Of course, we do not have personnel control mechanisms in place. I am sure that we will give due consideration to ensure that we are maintaining future productivity and efficiency by continuing to review how best we should look at that issue in terms of the size of Government.

The President: I call on Mrs Christian.

The Speaker: 'Yes' would have done.

Mrs Christian: I do appreciate that we have got a long Order Paper, but I do have more questions. I hope the answers are as succinct as my questions.

We have set an objective to attract a larger, younger population, but what is our strategy to address the demographic shift, where those aged over 65 will have a much greater role in shaping our economy; and why is this not seen as a key opportunity?

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: I think there are lots of opportunities, Mr President, within the overarching ambitions of this Strategy and one of course must acknowledge the value of our over-50s and over-60s. Of course, part of that must be seeing the context of the value that they will bring by continuing to contribute to society. I would suggest that is an ongoing piece of work that should not just be for the future but it should also be for the here and now. I look forward to developing out further understanding of how everybody can continue to contribute to the success of the

Island and also of course recognise that this Government takes very seriously the looking after and consideration of everybody on the Island, whatever their age.

The President: Hon. Members, can I ask you check your phones? There appears to be a phone on vibrate. It will be affecting our microphones that are very sensitive.

I now call upon Miss August-Hanson.

Miss August-Hanson: Thank you, Mr President, and I thank the Chief Minister for the update and welcome the ambition, direction and clarity.

But can the Chief Minister expand on what he had said in his speech here, that:

> We need to look beyond year to year plans and have a sustained commitment to the … medium and long term with measurable results and accountability –

– as to if he has an idea as to whether or not there will be a high-level, robust metric monitoring needed, not to chastise those who are responsible for delivery, but to support them constructively in the journey ahead?

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: I do accept that there will need to be high-level monitoring and ensuring that we have actually given indicative progress towards our targets. But the ambition, I hope, is set out clearly and in fact, underpinning this, as I made clear in my Statement, two immediate targets which spring to mind, which I think now are both realistic, achievable and that we should be willing to invest in, is 20 megawatts of on-Island renewable supply. The ambition set out in this Strategy now to ensure that we have got access to 100% renewable energy supply by 2030, that we achieve our target of course of 5,000 new jobs by 2032.

All the key highlighting statistics I have already read out will lead us and enable us to be able to provide high-level metrics that we will be able to base information in terms of progress towards achieving these. And clearly there is still quite a lot of work to do to develop some of the underpinning policy and levers that we need to ensure success in some of these areas.

The President: I call on Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President.

Whilst welcoming this shift forward, we need to be realistic. There is a real gap between where we are now and where we want to be. Four key areas particularly merit attention. The first one, from my perspective, is housing. In terms of seeing the population grow by such a significant amount, how are we going to deal with that basic issue of housing? In terms of current situations, many people out there will be saying, 'Think about me. I can't afford a house, I'm in this difficult situation, I'm here now, I need a house.' We need to go beyond the infill mentality and think about new settlements, possibly villages, possibly towns. We need to think big in this area.

I also think we need to be more entrepreneurial. We have perhaps become too … *[Inaudible]* in approach, and that is possibly why we actually need this document. Rather than shifting forward in a natural, entrepreneurial way, we have become bogged down with red tape and other things, and regulations, and we need to actually look at what can be more spontaneous, where we want to be and move forward.

The third area I would like you to really consider is how are we going to actually fill that gap in terms of health and education?

And finally, the fourth area which was really concerning me is how we are actually going to really make this real. It is good having the document, it is good having the next steps, but in terms of reality, how are we going to keep this driving? There are going to be lots of challenges out there.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: I agree to a certain extent that we need to be realistic. We also need to be appreciative of the current challenges. But that does not mean to say we should not be ambitious, Mr President, and absolutely should not be afraid to recognise the risks of pursuing life as we currently are in terms of our unstated economic ambitions.

We talk about growing the working population, this is the first time I think that we have come forward with complete clarity and ensured that we have set a target for what we believe the optimum population should be in the next 15 years. And in doing so, Mr President, what that will mean is exactly what the Hon. Member was referring to: enabling us to plan, I think more effectively and efficiently, as to what the Island should look like for the future in terms of how our towns and cities and villages should be planned for in terms of their development, where housing should go. And of course, importantly, as I am going to make clear in terms of the Statement on the built environment reform, ensuring that we are moving at a faster pace to make sure our vacant brownfield sites are brought back into use, and clearly housing and apartments and retail premises, for example, are going to be part of that planning project. But getting those brownfield sites is a part.

I would also point out to the Hon. Member that we have a number of derelict, dilapidated, vacant properties across the Island. I think that somewhere in the figure of 4,000 vacant properties on the Island was highlighted in the census. So that too should be a fundamental part of it and should not be seen necessarily as a charter for building on greenfield sites. In fact, quite the opposite. This is very much about regeneration, ensuring that the Island's towns and villages have the right facilities and are able to provide the right environment for the future.

In terms of the services, healthcare and education, these are ongoing matters. Irrespective of our ambitions, we have got to move forward and ensure that we are bringing these services up to the highest possible standards. We are already in the throes of a significant transformation programme when it comes to healthcare, and we all know the challenges that are being faced. We also recognise in education that there are challenges. Indeed, this Government has made a commitment for quality assurance schemes to be brought forward and brought in.

These initiatives, this sense of direction, this sense of purpose, should be with us in any case, irrespective of the challenges and the ambitions set out in this Economic Strategy. But of course, what I would say is it will give us focus and direction in terms of helping us support and develop these services for the future.

The President: I call on Mr Glover.

Mr Glover: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

I will just add to towns and cities on behalf of my Douglas colleagues, you can add cities in there as town and villages now as well. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.)

Just with regard to this, obviously the Government is going to have to be really organised and focused on this, so one question to ask first of all is when are we going to move to a Government of single legal entity, as we move towards this. And also the second point initially I just want to make – I have got more – how important does the Chief Minister feel maintenance of what we have is part of this as well?

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: There is no specific plan to move to a single legal entity. I think what we as a Council have already recognised in Our Island Plan is that there is a need for better governance and a responsibility for us as a Council, indeed us as a Tynwald, to adapt and adopt a one

Government approach. We have sought to do that by bringing together policy and delivery control and understanding back into the centre.

And of course, with this Economic Strategy and in setting out four key pillars, I think that will give us the focus that we need to draw up an understanding of how policy is interlinking. But of course the Hon. Member's point about ensuring that this has got proper governance is correct, and that will be done through an Economic Strategy board obviously and ultimately by the Council of Ministers. And we will need to make sure that we have got the right workstreams in train and that we give the relevant prioritisation – and, indeed, thought – to the relevant policies that we need to be undertaken to be successful in this area.

I was not quite clear, Mr President, on maintenance, what he meant by maintenance. Perhaps he could just clarify for me?

Mr Glover: Just in terms of the infrastructure that we have, that we maintain it rather than actually getting to the point where we have got to spend even more money on actually redoing something.

The Chief Minister: I think maintenance is fundamentally an important point, and I do not think this detracts and should not detract from all the issues that we as a Government are doing. The key point is that it sets clarity, vision and focus about the future. So when it comes, for example, to infrastructure projects, we should be building properly for the future, and we should understand how we can properly accommodate matters and numbers, for example, when we come to build new schools or when we come to build health facilities. The clarity will be brought and that will feed into, I very much hope, the next iteration of the strategic Island plan, which is due after the North and West Area Plan.

The President: I call on Mr Peters.

Mr Peters: Thank you, Mr President.

The Chief Minister will know that I am not a big fan of management consultancies, and there are a couple of thoughts that have come to me as part of this. The Chief Minister has referred to KPMG strategic partners in this and I would have thought it was more a client-supplier relationship, but we live and learn. (**Mrs Christian:** Hear, hear.) We also learn in terms of obscure management speak. When I was a young man people faced problems and then management consultants change that to *challenges*. Now it is headwinds. I just worry that the people of my constituency will be looking at headwinds to see when to put the washing out.

Was there anything in the KPMG report that Members of this Hon. Court have not known for years? Did it provide value for money for this Hon. Court?

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: I would suggest that it has provided significant value for money. It has provided a platform and an understanding of what the outcomes will be if we do not start to change and that alone is worth its weight, I would suggest, in gold.

There has been substantial analysis, consultation and indeed, I would suggest, an understanding brought through in the 600-or-so pages that you will be party to and able to read imminently, as will obviously all members of the public, that really do drive home the message that sometimes I think politically we tend to gloss over. It will highlight, in that report, deficiencies in Government services. You will see that some of our services are *not* as good perhaps as we would like to think they are, and it brings those matters to a fore.

But it fundamentally brings home to us that the success of the economy has been based on two sectors alone, really, in the last few years. That the rest of our economy, whilst yes, has been seemingly okay on the surface, is not really producing the growth and dynamics that we need for

future sustainability or to give us confidence that it does produce security in the longer term for our people, for our business owners; indeed, for our Island, and indeed for Government revenues. Of course, that is compounded by a population problem and a demographic issue, which is showing an ageing population, which more and more people will eventually go into retirement, shrinking the working base. The forecasted outcome of that will be stagnation in terms of our economic performance and increasing pressure on our public revenues.

We have to change. This report was absolutely worth every penny and I think from here on in this is the Government's response that we are talking about today. This is not strategic partners; this is us. This is you, me and indeed the stakeholders, which fundamentally are the people and businesses and community of this Island.

The President: I call on Mrs Christian.

Mrs Christian: Thank you.

I quote the Chief Minister: 'The economy is based on two sectors.' Does this Economic Strategy value our self-employed and SMEs, especially after COVID? As Chair of the Planning Committee, I see many applications for small businesses or self-employed people setting up at their home. I wonder if there is policy, or has there been thought of policy levers to support these initiatives. If the man on the street was to look at this document, can they see where they play a part in this Economic Strategy? How will *they* contribute to the Island's economic growth?

I am concerned our pursuit of new sectors … we are leaving essential lifestyle businesses and *people* behind. Forgive me, but this seems evident, as they are not listed again as an opportunity and perhaps the Chief Minister could confirm how many self-employed people were spoken to at the engagement phase?

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: Just to be clear, for clarity, I said that the analysis shows that the success of the economy has been driven particularly by two sectors and that other sectors effectively, whilst continuing to perform to a level, were not, in essence, growing at the rate that they probably needed to grow, nor were they providing long-term security and sustainability for those involved in the sector, and, indeed, for the impact of those who are on the receiving end in terms of resources, facilities and, indeed, public finances. So just to be clear on that.

Of course, Mr President, as you grow an economy and grow sectors, there will be opportunities for all sorts of businesses and advantages for many of our self-employed and, indeed, for many of the businesses such as retail and hospitality and many other businesses, enabling and supporting businesses across our economy. This is a Strategy that we are bringing forward for the Island and as part of that will contain many different strands.

But key amongst that, I would suggest, going back to the question I think I was asked by the Speaker, we do need to have targets that are put in place for sector growth, that are driven by Agencies. And in doing so in terms of more aggressively pursuing the GDP and jobs targets that we need, we will, by virtue of that, benefit many of our existing businesses that are here and benefit many of those who are in SMEs and, indeed, in self-employment.

The President: I call on the Hon. Loayreyder.

The Speaker: Gura mie eu.

As part of the Government's response to this plan, the Chief Minister has announced a £100-million start to a £1-billion fund. Can the Chief Minister commit to saying more at some point in the near future about the governance of that fund? I would hate for us to confuse bureaucracy

with good governance. Where is the other £900 million coming from and is this a prelude to greater Government borrowing?

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: Well, just to be clear, I think the £1 billion represents a combined public and private sector initiative that we think will be required over the 10-year period to really drive some of the key initiatives, and I expect a lot of that will indeed come from the private sector. I do not expect the public sector to fulfil anything like that sort of figure.

The Treasury Minister will of course bring forward the terms of reference for any such fund and will receive the appropriate Tynwald endorsements and, of course, make clear under scrutiny how that fund is to be applied; and we will bring forward a set of tracking enablers to ensure that people recognise how much investment has been committed. But of course this really defines the investment in terms of brownfield sites, regeneration investment, offshore energy investment; and, of course, some of it will be bringing funds back into Government as well. So this should not just be seen – and in fact *should not* be seen – as a sort of proliferate use of money, but we do have to have funds available to kick-start the economy.

The Speaker: The point about borrowing, Chief Minister?

The Chief Minister: I think it is fair to say, Mr President, this does not determine borrowing, but I think when you look closely at the Strategy – and indeed, I am sure the Treasury Minister will be on his feet on multiple occasions in the autumn, explaining matters, but – we do talk about better use of Government investments and reserves to be applied in terms of potentially understanding how we can better spend that money in the relevant framework to help benefit our people on our Island by creating a much better vibrancy in our towns and regeneration of our brownfield sites and, *vis-à-vis*, creation of housing and other related infrastructure projects.

The President: I call on Mr Wannenburgh.

Mr Wannenburgh: Thank you, Mr President.

I am delighted to hear about the plans to transition our economy by growing the population by 2031, stronger public finances by 2032, and a net carbon remission by 2050.

I congratulate the Chief Minister on such clarity. It is to be admired. Perhaps you could now ask KPMG for a date as to when we will no longer need a food bank on the Isle of Man, and does he agree it is a stain?

Thank you.

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: Just to be clear, the population target was 2037. But, yes, I mean this Strategy is about increasing the wealth and prosperity for all, and security for all, our Island residents. The Report, indeed, talks about ensuring that we have appropriate living standards, that we are creating well-paid jobs, and we are doing our best for everybody across the Island. We are keen to make sure and, indeed, this Government set out in its Island Plan that we wanted the economic benefits for all – everybody across the Island – and we are going to continue to strive to achieve that through mechanisms such as the living wage, by creating better job opportunities, by creating diversity of job opportunities and by tackling matters such as housing and doing what we can, of course, to try and tackle the cost of the current energy crisis.

The President: I call on Mr Craine.

Mr Craine: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane. Thank you, Chief Minister.

This is an incredibly bold Economic Strategy with the four policy pillars we have seen referred to on: population, economy, services and sustainability. It is on policy pillar one, the demographic, that I would like to concentrate.

Over the last 30-40 years studying the Isle of Man's population, I would not have welcomed in the past setting a target of 100,000 and 15 years to achieve it. I would have been concerned about the outcome and concerned what happens at the end of it, but I absolutely accept that our current demographic imbalances are extreme, and we need a bold initiative to address that. We have, and it has been touched on, our over-65 population – one of the six oldest countries on the planet – is going to grow over the next 15 years, because of the number of people in their 50s and early 60s. Our 20- to 29-year-olds are showing, over the last 10 years, net emigration from those age groups –

The President: Mr Craine, this is an opportunity to ask a question about the …

Mr Craine: Yes, I will get to a question.

And I recognise the fall in births going in there as well. I welcome the recognition of the redrawing of the demographics and I welcome your suggestion that this has to be seen in the context of increasing births, better support for families as well as encouraging people moving in and entrepreneurs.

The question I would ask: other questioners have touched on housing, in particular, and you touched on towns and villages; I would just like reassurance that we are not going to try and squeeze these 15,000 extra people into the strategic reserves that have come out of the existing Strategic Plan, that the next Strategic Plan will be much more imaginative in its planning as to how we accommodate an extra 15,000 people within the Island.

Thank you. Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: Yes, I would like to give that reassurance. This is not just about expansion, but also helping us regenerate as well. I think that is the first point to make, and in fact, a key focus of this Government will be to regenerate as much in terms of the way of brownfield sites that we can possibly regenerate, and I will make some clarity on that in terms of the built environment reform. As I have already pointed out, we have empty homes across the Island. We have homes that can be regenerated themselves. We can create more space within existing buildings that are currently underutilised. So there are lots of actual initiatives that can be used.

But going towards that Strategic Plan, again, I think the benefit is – and this is something I have personally believed in for a long time – we need to do better planning for our city, for our towns, for our villages, in terms of how they grow and what they do look like in the future. I think this gives us the opportunity to do that in a robust way for the future, because we do need to take care of our Island and of our environment as well, but nevertheless, that does not detract from the need to ensure that we have got long-term economic sustainability. And now we have to face up to that challenge, I would suggest, and start in train our policies and programmes to make sure that we are well placed for the future.

The President: I call on Mrs Maska.

Mrs Maska: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

I do welcome the statement that the Chief Minister has made today and I think, as my hon. colleague in LegCo has alluded to, it is a very bold ambition that we have presented to us.

I just have a few questions. I would like to know how the Chief Minister foresees we will seize the opportunities and engage with the private sector, as is outlined in the plan to make sure that

we can instil confidence for investment from the private sector, as has been alluded to. I know there have been some engagements in the past that have gone on for five years and got nowhere, and I would like to think that we do not keep repeating those mistakes, Chief Minister.

I also would wonder how we plan to engage with our young population, and this came home to me yesterday when we had our Junior Tynwald. They are really interested in the future of our Island. Especially when we had lunch we were able to talk one-to-one and they had some really great questions, great ideas and I would like to think that as part of this vision, we really make strides in engaging with our young population. (**Two Members:** Hear, hear.)

The last question: I raised this at the briefing, but I would hate to think that we are going to miss a trick with our older population. We seem to be labelling our older population as if they are a draw on what we can do, (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) but the spend power of our silver pound is much greater than it ever used to be, these are people who have no longer got mortgages, they are secure. People are living healthier lives and when you look at our visitors to the Island … I come along the promenade every day and it is quite apparent that our visitors at the height of the season are the silver pounders going along the promenade, and I would like to see in the fullness of time the evidence that comes out of what is happening now post-COVID, and they also are quite active in the staycations. I number myself in that as well.

Then finally, without pre-empting the Statement the Chief is going to make on the built environment reform, I would like to think that within this vision the ability to act nimbly and look at planning at larger applications in a much more engaging and proactive and enabling manner is going to also give confidence across the piece, not just on the Island but off the Island towards future inward investment.

Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: I would agree, obviously, with the Hon. Member that enabling the private sector to succeed is the only way that we will effectively deliver this. Government can only do so much. A critical part is enabling the private sector to succeed, and I am afraid there are many instances over *many* years where we have sought to do that and not succeeded. We must make that happen.

There is an opportunity for proper consultation and discussion with the private sector, indeed with the whole community, including the young, over the summer and into the early autumn in terms of the overarching ambitions contained within this and in terms of how we can actually work to make this happen.

I think the built environment reform is one example where we are starting to make clear our ambitions to free up and enable the private sector to start reinvesting or investing with confidence when it comes particularly to our brownfield sites.

It is about effective delivery and we have to keep focused on delivery otherwise we will not succeed. Part of that delivery comes by enabling the success through the provision of legislation, grants, taxation, legislation, planning reform etc. and we need to be ready to make sure that we put in place those levers. Indeed, throughout the Report and in the Government response we talk about the examples of policy levers that are available to us to enable things to happen, and we must make it happen successfully.

But there will be some difficult discussions to be had about how we help shape that future population, and I do not want to categorise this as some sort of silver pounders, as I think she referred to them, or some sort of a Government that is failing to recognise the value of the silver pound because it is not. But we have to have an acceptance of the situation, of the realities of the situation, and therefore we need to be clear in terms of what we need to do to redress that; not just for the benefit of the younger generations, but for the benefit of the older generations too. Bear in mind that myself and others will probably be in that category by the time we get to 2037.

But this is about an acceptance and I think the need to accept that we need to change because these demographic issues, as are seen in some of the Far Eastern countries at the moment, will cause economic stagnation if you do not start to try and make active efforts to redress the balance. And in doing so, as I have said during a previous answer, we can do that by enabling family-friendly policies, ensuring it is affordable to have more children than are currently being done at the birth rate … keeping our young on the Island, enabling them to return successfully to the Island and of course, attracting the workers and entrepreneurs that we need to help meet the targets we have set out.

The President: I call on Mrs Christian.

Mrs Christian: Thank you, Mr President.

I do have lots more. I just go back, sadly, to the question that I asked prior. Could the Chief Minister confirm how many self-employed people were spoken with at the engagement phase, as I am at a loss as to how a strategic partner can know what challenges face the self-employed people when they have not been consulted? But I am happy to know if they have been consulted; I would love to know how many were actually consulted at the time of this.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: Dozens I expect, Mr President, but I will clarify the exact number and circulate it.

The President: I call on Mr Glover.

Mr Glover: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

Will the Chief Minister acknowledge two other sectors that do have potential to grow and become big contributors to the Island?

Do I take this, with your other hat on as interim Enterprise Minister, this is a green light for the medicinal cannabis sector on the Island, which will be obviously of great benefit for Cooil Road, Jurby and the Airport Technology Gateway, to name but a few?

And I am interested to know a little bit more about using our territorial waters to generate profit there from wind; and does he see this as an opportunity as well to establish and bring a green economy onto the Island, creating jobs as well?

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: Yes, I absolutely do. I think there are a number of opportunities that exist, including the green economy. That is clearly mentioned in our Strategy and in terms of enabling that economy to succeed we will be doing everything we can. I think we have already made our commitments clear on medicinal cannabis and, doubtless, we will see some progress within the next few months in terms of how that is developing out.

But sustainability, renewable energy: it is clear to us and, indeed, from our reports and analysis that have been done, we are underperforming in this area and we have allowed ourselves to fall behind the programme when it comes to maximising the revenues, if nothing else, from ensuring that our seabed is leased effectively, that offshore wind plays a key part of that, and in doing so, of course there are questions to be asked in terms of where that feeds into grids.

But we need to move forward. We have got our offshore territorial seas; they are being underutilised and we can use that to bring in more revenue to the Island. We can contribute to global renewable targets and climate change targets, and we can also create jobs on the Island. So that will be a key part of progress in the next couple of years.

The President: I call on Mrs Caine.

Mrs Caine: Thank you, Mr President.

I thank the Chief Minister and I really welcome the vision and ambition that is evident in the Economic Strategy.

A couple of questions – following on from the Hon. Member for Douglas North, Mr Wannenburgh, really. Critically, in the early part of delivering this Strategy, is removing the inequalities that are currently widening between those that are doing quite well on the Island and particularly the young people who do not feel they can get a step on the ladder, either housing ladder or career ladder…? And when it is so much easier for people to obtain both jobs and housing in other jurisdictions, what is he going to do immediately to assist, deliver those people and encourage those people to come here?

I was hearing only at the weekend of three graduates who failed to get into public service on the Isle of Man, despite having relevant degree qualifications. So the policy is there, the will is there, it is all in the document, but actually recent experiences are Government public services are not that welcoming to graduates. It is a struggle for them to get here and when they get here there is no housing and they are then feeling they have to go away.

So immediately in the short term what is he going to do to remove the inequalities? I am particularly interested in education possibilities, and can he expand at all on the campus idea that is outlined in this Strategy and whether that will offer further opportunities to bring and keep young people on the Island?

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: Yes, I will just start with that latter point first. I can of course confirm in the Strategy the idea of having a sort of knowledge economy based on the Isle of Man is mentioned and discussed, and one would do that through the development of a campus alongside partners from across the United Kingdom. That idea needs to be developed out and much more detail added, but that would certainly be one opportunity that would help encourage and develop the latest knowledge and latest thinking, and also provide employers and employees with a mutually beneficial relationship and help support our development as an Island.

Of course, the problems of today just do not disappear and it would be naive of us not to recognise there are fundamental problems that we are seeking to address. We have set up the Housing and Communities Board now, which is starting to make progress in terms of trying to give access to schemes for first-time buyers. We are developing, as the Hon. Member will know, highlighting the number of developments that are taking place across the Island, and I think there will be a number of first-time buyer properties built before March 2024, alongside other housing developments that are taking place. We have a new Area Plan coming forward for the north and west. So we are taking steps to address some of those problems.

Of course I have mentioned the workforce and skills strategy that needs to be developed alongside the childcare strategy. So there is a lot that is already being undertaken, Mr President. It is already highlighted in our Island Plan. The commitments are being made. They are being brought forward and we have got to still continue to tackle the challenges of today, but in doing so, we need to build towards solving and helping stabilise and sustain the challenges of tomorrow.

The President: I call on Dr Allinson.

Dr Allinson: Thank you very much, Mr President.

I would like to take the Chief Minister's invitation to stand to my feet and support this bold and ambitious project, and I will continue to do that.

In terms of the engagement with the private sector, would he agree with me that following on from the work of KPMG in terms of fleshing out the framework, what is planned after today is a comprehensive consultation with the public, a presentation at the Tynwald conference, not only consultation but engagement with the very people who will aid the development of this nation and actually drive forward the prosperity?

Thank you.

The President: Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: Yes, indeed, Mr President, I totally agree with the good doctor – *(Laughter)* Treasury Minister! I think it is absolutely important that we do have this engagement. We are serious about this in terms of consultation will be launched imminently, and I would encourage all Hon. Members to actively seek to have discussions with their constituents and interested stakeholders in this Strategy over the next few weeks and months. And indeed, I look forward to seeing Hon. Members, if possible, at the Government Conference, where I hope we will have enabled proper discussion to have taken place and to hear views from a number of commentators and stakeholders with particular interest in the Strategy and what it means for the Island.

The President: I call on Mrs Christian.

Mrs Christian: Thank you, Mr President.

Whilst our strategic partners deliberate, what quick fixes have been considered to tackle the tight labour market? For example, has a policy lever being considered to lower or abolish SB Tax on second jobs?

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: There are a number of initiatives underway, as the Hon. Member knows, to help with our employment shortage at the moment, including a fully public and transparent strategy when it comes to Locate; and we are going to continue to work to enable employers to attract future employees to the Island and develop our existing base when it comes to re-educating and training those who are available and interested in work and skills.

The President: I call on Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President.

This is about moving forward together. With regard to the development of the campus, rather than starting at step one, could the Freeport, the Airport Technology Gateway and Balthane be considered as a perfect location for this campus-type thing? By doing that, this area can move forward swiftly and the plan can also really move forward.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: I look forward to these sorts of ideas feeding in in due course, but it is probably going to a level of detail (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) that is not appropriate at the moment, Mr President.

The President: Mrs Christian.

Mr Craine: Tax changes have been identified as one of the key five economic drivers for economic growth; could the Chief Minister deliberate a little bit more on the role of tax and the Isle of Man's competitive advantage?

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: I would suggest there are a number of challenges in front of us, as the Hon. Member knows, not least recent announcements around global tax rates and what the implications may be for the Isle of Man in the future. But I think it is important that we have effective and fair taxation, that the taxation strategy is designed to ensure that we have an Island that is economically sustainable, that is maximising our revenues and ensuring that we have an equal share that we are taxing properly across the various sectors that are available to us. But I would not get drawn too much into this at this stage. It is very early days, but we have identified the fact that we do need to grow Government revenues and that can be done in a variety of ways, and a properly aligned tax strategy will also ensure our effectiveness and sustainability, and indeed our attractiveness into the future.

The President: Mrs Christian, once more.

Mrs Christian: My last question, you will all be glad to know.

As the largest employer on the Island, how will we drive change and drive our own transformation plans in line with this Economic Strategy? Where is the answer for us in the Strategy? I am finding it hard to follow where it is in the plan. And is it that we have just paid for a strategy that has not really looked at our part in the economy? I am not sure.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Chief Minister, to reply.

The Chief Minister: I think the plan clearly recognises that Government plays a very important role in the economy and indeed we are setting out at the moment – this Government, this Council of Ministers – to ensure that we have got the right governance in place, to ensure that we have got the right human resources office in place, to ensure that we are setting the right objectives for our employees within Government and that we are listening to our employers, that we are encouraging productivity and we are going to continue to develop that.

That is not just about the future, that is happening right now in a number of different areas and we are going to continue to ensure that we push forward to ensure that Government is better equipped to deliver and that our employees are proud to work for an organisation that puts at the very heart of everything it does, the customer, the stakeholders and everybody who is contributing to the success of this Island.

The President: That concludes Item 3.

4. Offshore Energy Strategy – Statement by the Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture – Statement not made

The President: Item 4 is not to be moved, as mentioned.

5. Climate Change –
Statement by the Chief Minister

The President: We move on to Item 5, Climate Change, and I call on the Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister (Mr Cannan): Mr President, 32 years ago, in 1990, the dangers of climate change were first discussed in this Court, and on that day a call was made to take the problems it could cause very seriously. Since that time there have been many debates and motions, most of which have supported urgent action.

Whilst some progress has been made, with the Climate Change Act coming into effect, Prof. Curran's IMPACT report and the Phase 1 Action Plan, the Island's greenhouse gas emissions are as high today as they have ever been. We must change that and ensure that this administration puts our Island on track for net-zero by 2050.

We are of course not alone. Countries all over the world are trying, but too often failing, to meet their climate goals. It remains the case that fossil fuels and high-emitting practices are embedded in every facet of our lives, so the scale and complexity of the task is huge.

But limiting the damaging effects of climate change must, and can, be done. Not only that, but a failure to get with the climate change programme will leave us exposed to great uncertainty and potential economic and energy insecurity in the future. It will simply be irresponsible to not apply ourselves, to the best of our ability, in achieving our climate change targets and in particular securing renewable energy supplies for the future. Therefore, the Isle of Man Climate Change Plan 2022-2027, the Roadmap to 2050 and regulations setting a new interim target for 2030 set out the next vital steps in our journey to net-zero and have been published on the Register of Business.

The Plan commits to decarbonising our electricity supply through the installation of a second interconnector by 2030, via which we can import renewable and carbon-neutral energy. In addition, we will ensure that at least 20 megawatts of locally generated renewable energy is to be available by 2026. These changes will enable emissions reductions in other areas, such as transport and building heating.

The Plan sets sectoral emission reduction targets compatible with achieving not only net-zero by 2050, but also our interim targets. Tackling emissions from heating buildings provides us with a unique opportunity to help with rising fuel bills. By supporting and incentivising energy efficiency measures, we will make homes easier and cheaper to heat while simultaneously reducing emissions. We will seek to accelerate the ban on fossil-fuel heating systems in new buildings, bringing it forward from 2025 to 2024, alongside improving energy ratings through building regulations, future-proofing our new homes so that they become 97% efficient. (**Mrs Christian:** Hear, hear.)

The Plan supports effective decarbonisation of our transport sector, which can be achieved through greater use of public transport, active travel strategies and improving infrastructure for electric vehicles. Reducing private vehicle use, and particularly single occupancy, can save households money, reduce congestion and pollution and improve health and wellbeing.

We will ensure that our workforce and businesses have access to the opportunities and information they need as we transition to a low-emission economy and that they are able to attract staff and grow due to their, and indeed our, sustainability credentials.

We will realise the potential of our land and sea to help us achieve our climate goals. Our agriculture and fishing industries will become more sustainable and the efficient production of local food will continue to be supported and promoted, with new strategies planned to consider food security and our agricultural strategy due in the coming months.

Strategies for each emission sector will be developed and implemented during the Plan period, ensuring that our approach to reducing emissions is joined up and maximises economic, social and environmental benefits.

Mr President, the Isle of Man Climate Change Plan 2022-2027, the Roadmap to 2050 and the regulations setting a new interim target of 35% by 2030 have been added to the Register of Business and will be laid before this Court for approval in October.

It is true that the Plan has been delayed, which is regrettable. But it is of the utmost importance that we get this right and provide the Island with a climate change plan that can deliver real emissions reductions, and deliver them in an orderly, well-managed way which supports the health and wellbeing of our community, economy and environment.

I believe that the additional time that we have taken has enabled this and I hope that the Plan's clear commitment to reducing emissions across all sectors, at a rate compatible with meeting our climate goals, will reassure Hon. Members that the Council of Ministers is taking climate change very seriously.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Ms Faragher.

Ms Faragher: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane. I did not expect to be the first there.

I would like to thank the Chief Minister for his Statement and for his words giving commitment on this issue, but I do want to express my disappointment at the lack of ambition in the climate target. It is a far lower target than our surrounding jurisdictions, and it is a worrying start, I think, to the assurance given by the Chief Minister that the Council of Ministers is taking climate change very seriously.

We are not then following the high-ambition pathway indicated by Prof. Curran in his IMPACT Report, or the low ambition one, actually. Apparently we are taking a middle pathway of medium ambition. So my question is: is 35% the maximum that can be achieved from the current action plan by 2030, or does the Plan aim to try and exceed this target; and if so, by how much?

Gura mie eu.

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: I am afraid I have got to disagree with the Hon. Member. I think that what we have set out is an ambitious, realistic, targeted, achievable Roadmap to 2050, and along the way we brought forward the target now to 2030 for achieving 35% of our target and alongside that 20 megawatts of on-Island renewable generation and 100% access to renewable supplies by 2030. I think that is ambitious, I think that is achievable, but we are still going to have to drive that to make sure it happens. There are a number of practicalities that need to be overcome. This is the right timescale for this moment and now we need to get on and start delivering to ensure that we take the Island forward towards 2050.

The President: I call on Mr Ashford.

Mr Ashford: Thank you, Mr President.

The second interconnector is all well and good, Mr President, for decreasing emissions, but what does that do in relation to the Island's strategy around energy security and independence? Can I ask the Chief Minister what the Government's policy currently is on having energy security and independence? Is it still that we should be independent or is it that we are going to become more reliant on supplies from elsewhere?

The President: I call on the Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: We are currently, to a large extent, reliant on supplies from elsewhere. We are simply changing the emphasis to ensure that we meet our renewable targets and alongside that ensuring that we have additional energy security by ensuring that we have plugged in. In fact

we have moved away from fossil fuels, increased our security by moving to renewable energy supplies that will be delivered from the United Kingdom.

Once this is achieved, as it currently stands, it does not mean to say that we are shutting down the gas generators immediately. They will still be there as back-up in case of any problems with renewable energy supplies. They will provide that base platform of additional energy security. And what I would say to Hon. Members is as this whole debate progresses and the challenge of having future energy supplies is tackled by some of the world's brightest minds and biggest companies. We are going to continue to track that and as the technology develops, as matters progress, doubtless then we will be making an assessment of what else can be done to ensure that the Island has and is provided with complete, or as complete as it can be, energy security.

I have already outlined to Hon. Members that we have now committed today open policy for 20 megawatts of on-Island supply. My hope, and I am sure it is the hope of the Council of Ministers, is that as we progress now, we will be able to increase that number and there are going to be lots of opportunities, as we develop this Climate Change Plan, for supply options to be considered and indeed developed, as we overcome problems such as storage and indeed the capability of the grid to accept renewable energy supplies onto the grid in a consistent and stable manner.

The President: I call on Ms Faragher.

Ms Faragher: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane, and thanks to the Chief Minister for his previous comments and for answering somebody's question, but I do not think that I got an answer to my question and I would really like to hear the Chief Minister's comments on this. Is 35% the maximum that can be achieved from the current action plan by 2030, or does the Plan aim to try and exceed this target; and if so, by how much?

Gura mie eu.

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: And I repeat my answer: I believe we have set out a practical, achievable, measurable, realistic plan we should all be able to get behind and buy-in to, and will take us towards our targets. Clearly much of this is dependent on when the interconnector is put in. If that can be brought forward, then I am sure we will all be welcome.

But the point is, Mr President, we do need to be practical and realistic, as well as ambitious about our targets. I think we have successfully managed to do that today in bringing this forward, by improving our timescales, by making these commitments on renewable energy on Island, by making our commitments to renewable energy off Island, by making our commitments to the interconnector and I think we should all get behind those commitments now and start thrashing out some of the finer detail in terms of the sectoral commitments that have been outlined in the Climate Change Plan.

The President: I call on Mr Glover.

Mr Glover: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

It is somewhat ironic that we are talking about climate change when it is so hot in here today –

Mrs Maltby: And reducing emissions!

Mr Glover: – and a BBC weather forecast a couple of years ago did one for 2050, showing 40, 42 degrees, and here we are in 2022 and it is happening.

I just wanted to get a little bit more detail about *(Interjection by Mr Henderson)* food and the sustainability there. The Chief Minister – and I welcome this – has talked about continuing to be

supported, local production of food, and promoted with new strategies planned to consider food security and our future agricultural strategy. I am just wondering if part of that is going to be trying to get more crops, more veg grown on the Island, rather than actually paying farmers just to leave land as it is.

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: We will be bringing forward that plan, as I have outlined, and the related policies to that. So I would suggest to the Hon. Member food remains a very important policy area for this Government, the production of food, and we need to align that successfully with our climate change commitments.

I know there has been a lot of engagement with the farming industry over the past 12, 24 months. There will be continued engagement with the farming industry, but we need to also understand our food security requirements. We have made a commitment to deliver on that. I am sure this Hon. Court will be debating that on the due date that we have set out for it to be produced.

The President: I call on Mr Ashford.

Mr Ashford: Thank you, Mr President.

Would the Chief Minister agree with me that being an island in the middle of the Irish Sea, we have, very much, natural resources in terms of wind and wave and that in fact we have a unique opportunity as a jurisdiction to ensure that we are not reliant on others for our electricity supplies? Would the Chief Minister further agree that some of the things we are seeing currently around the world shows why jurisdictions, where they can, should try and be energy independent?

While I am on my feet, Mr President, I have just done some quick back-of-a-fag-packet calculations, so I am happy for the Chief Minister to correct me if I am wrong, but the pledge of 20 megawatts locally by 2026 takes us from generating on Island currently 7% of renewable energy to between 10% and 15%. *(Interjection by Mr Speaker)* It might be higher than that – if my calculations are wrong, I am happy for the Chief Minister to correct me. I recognise it says 'at least', but is that the limit of the ambition?

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: So the ambition obviously is set out in accordance with the information that we have seen about the resilience of the grid to be able to take energy supplies onto it, and the 20 megawatt figure has been agreed between us and the Manx Utilities Authority as being achievable. That is our target and clearly the Hon. Member will recognise we do have an abundance of natural resources. It is not necessarily the availability of natural resources that is the problem, it is the technology behind the ability of the grid to take the ebb and flow that comes from renewable energy and, indeed, to also overcome the problem of being able to store the generated renewable energies in an efficient and effective manner.

Mr President, technology is improving, technology is increasing. I think what we have done today is we have set out again clear targets to enable the Island to start developing a platform for on-Island regeneration. It is not as simple and straightforward as people would necessarily have you believe, but we must start to force ourselves to understand how we can secure, I hope for the long term, successfully, on-Island regeneration. I would suggest that the platform that we are laying out ensures that we are going to successfully cover multi-layered bases for the future for this Island, so that from 2030 we will have a number of areas of electricity generation, which we can seek to supply onto our grid and to make sure that that security is in place. I very much hope that the long-term future will be renewable.

The President: I call on Mr Craine.

Mr Craine: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

I would like to pick up on a couple of things and ask a significant question at the end of it, really. In terms of what we are trying to achieve here – I think the Chief Minister covered it – our starting point is behind where other countries have started; behind where the UK has been. UK: well down on its 1990 emissions. We are over 25% up on our 1990 emissions at this stage. What we are looking to try and do here is drop our emissions from 660,000 tonnes a year by 230,000 tonnes in eight years. Anyone who thinks that is not ambitious actually needs to just look at how we achieve that.

So the question I have just got to ask is would you agree that dropping 230,000 tonnes is going to be an extremely difficult task, it absolutely relies on getting a second interconnector, which is likely to have a seven-year lead-in to it, as well as getting the 20-megawatts minimum online renewable generation? That is going to be a massive achievement still ahead of us to do and if we achieve that by 2030, would the Chief Minister agree, we will have made a tremendous achievement; it is difficult to imagine how we could have gone beyond that? (**A Member:** Hear, hear.)

Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: I agree, *(Laughter)* and thank the Hon. Member for his clarity in terms of the question that he has asked, which I think will help us all understand with greater clarity in terms of the goals that we are setting out here and the ambition attached to it.

The President: I call on Mr Henderson.

Mr Henderson: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

Would the Chief Minister agree with me that it is not only about bringing the interconnector here and trying all the renewable energies? We have got 85,000 people here living on the Isle of Man and it has been scientifically measured that an individual human being leaves a carbon footprint of somewhere between 10 to 15 tonnes per year.

Would the Chief Minister further agree that one huge initiative within the arsenal of our climate change programme would be a public information programme, public health programme for climate change, to see how everyone on the Island could reduce their carbon footprint in whatever small way they can? And there are some easy win-wins to be had. And that 85,000 times even five tonnes per year is quite a significant dent into the figures Mr Craine was giving, thereby giving Government a huge lift up towards the target? Because at the end of the day, Eaghtyrane, would the Chief Minister also agree, it is not only a governmental problem, this, and it is impossible for Government to solve all by itself?

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: Absolutely. Fundamentally, everybody is a stakeholder in the climate change action plan, and indeed that is why it has received so much attention, I would suggest, and indeed previously consultation. Similarly, that is why, when delivering big issue matters like the Economic Strategy, we should ensure that we do not regard this as just one person's or one Minister's or one group of Ministers' or Tynwald's plan. This is for the Island, of which our community fundamentally are stakeholders.

What I like about this Plan is the fact it has really clearly, I think, identified the sectoral challenges that are facing us and particularly when it comes to transport and when it comes to buildings – 2 and 3 in the action plan – you will see quite clearly how the public, the community,

are going to be part of that. And yes, there will need to be the relevant consultations, education programmes and understanding about what we are seeking to do when we state, for example, that transport strategy is to deliver a 15% sector reduction by 2027. Clearly public transport, the policies attached to that, will play a key role, but also the public's understanding of how they can be part of that also needs to be made clear as well.

The President: Hon. Members, that concludes Item 5.

6. Review of the harms caused by illicit drugs – Statement by the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs

The President: We now move on to Item 6, Review of the harms caused by illicit drugs. I call on the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs.

The Minister for Justice and Home Affairs (Mrs Poole-Wilson): Mr President, by way of context in December 2020, Tynwald resolved that:

> Tynwald is of the opinion that the Island's approach to tackling the harms caused by illegal drugs should be informed by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment on Drugs and Alcohol undertaken by the Government in 2017; and that the Minister with responsibility for Justice should bring forward a report to Tynwald no later than June 2021 setting out how a review of the Island's approach to the harms caused by illegal drugs could be undertaken.

Following this resolution, my predecessor brought a report by the Council of Minister's Substance Misuse Steering Group to Tynwald in June 2021. That report outlined how a review of the Island's approach to the harms caused by illegal drugs could be undertaken.

Following a debate in June 2021, Tynwald resolved that:

> Tynwald approves the proposed approach for a review of the harms caused by illegal drugs set out in the Report on a proposal for a review of the harms caused by illicit drugs; and agrees that further information on the likely costs and timescales for such a review be submitted to Tynwald no later than October 2021.

Mr President, I am pleased to announce that in line with that resolution, after much consideration, this review will be undertaken by the Public Health Institute at John Moore's University. The Public Health Institute already works with Public Health in the Isle of Man to undertake a number of public health-related surveys and research and are acknowledged as experts in the field of public health policy development in relation to illicit drugs. They also carried out a similar exercise in Guernsey in 2020.

The terms of reference for the review reflect the approach agreed by this Hon. Court in June 2021. The review will examine indicators of substance use and related harms in the Isle of Man, with a specific focus on cannabis. The review will provide evidence that can be used to inform broader aspects of drug policy in the Isle of Man.

The research undertaken will provide an overview of the prevalence of drug use in the Isle of Man, and indicators of drug-related harm. Based on previous academic work undertaken by the Public Health Institute and others – for example, the States of Guernsey and the Irish Government – the review will examine the interaction between health and criminal justice systems with respect to drug use, and how alternative approaches to possession offences, including non-punitive approaches, could be used to promote the health, well-being and safety of people who use drugs, and of the wider community.

The three core objectives of the review are: (1) to provide an overview of the drugs situation in the Isle of Man, including a review of substance-use prevalence, harms and treatment, and criminal justice activity; (2) to understand public understanding and support for responses to cannabis and other drug use, including existing approaches and other non-punitive policies

designed to reduce drug-related harm; and (3) to carry out public and stakeholder engagement to inform the development of drug policy in the Isle of Man.

Hon. Members, the original resolution asked for the likely cost of the review. It is not appropriate for me to provide specific details but I can confirm that a bid to the Seized Asset Fund for £120,000 has been approved and this includes the cost of the review and also provision for public consultation and legal resource to support wider policy development.

The review will commence shortly and will be delivered by September 2023. Following this, it is our intention to bring policy options forward to this Hon. Court for January 2024.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: I call on Mr Ashford.

The Minister: Oh!

The Speaker: Please turn over!

The Minister: Please turn over, Mr President. *(Laughter)* I apologise.

The President: That is quite alright, do continue. We hardly noticed! *(Laughter)*

The Minister: It must be the heat!

I apologise for the delay in returning to this Hon. Court with further details of this review. However, I do believe that the time was needed to ensure that the approach was correct and following final procurement we could be clear on the timescales involved. I also recognise that the timescales for this review are quite long, but as I set out to this Hon. Court during the debate on the Island Plan in February, this review is vital to start to enable us to have the data and a clear evidence base to properly inform a wider debate on drugs policy.

Thank you Mr President.

Several Members: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: Strong finish! *(Laughter)*

The President: We now call on Mr Ashford.

Mr Ashford: Thank you, Mr President.

Can I welcome the statement by the Minister, it is great to see this is moving forward and it is a very positive statement.

A very quick and straightforward question: I was wondering if the Minister would be willing to circulate to Members the finalised terms of reference?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Yes, I will do. We will be publishing the terms of reference and I will make sure they are circulated to all Hon. Members.

The President: Thank you, Hon. Members, that concludes Item 6.

**7. The Built Environment Reform Programme –
Statement by the Chief Minister**

The President: We now move on to Item 7, the Built Environment Reform Programme, and I call on the Chief Minister to make a Statement.

The Chief Minister (Mr Cannan): Mr President, in February this year, when moving Our Island Plan, I gave particular emphasis on the need to address matters as to planning and the built environment, to progress the vision to build great communities and for a vibrant Island with better places for people.

There has for some time been a need not only to unlock the economic and social value of an agile and responsive planning system and policies. We also need to recognise the value of appropriate support and empowerment to local communities to develop localised regeneration strategies and action plans, together with the importance of incentivising brownfield sites and urban development.

In the intervening five months, driven by the Cabinet Office, with input and focus from across Departments, a two-year Built Environment Reform Programme has been developed, and I am very pleased to announce the publication of that programme today. The purpose of this reform programme is to achieve quality and vibrancy in urban living and town centre regeneration through sustainable development and a refreshed planning system for customer service.

Mr President, we know we must take action and resource to speed things up, make the improvements needed and to make a difference on the ground. This programme, with quick wins and a budget to back resources and change, as published today, will start to address the problems, we believe, that hold things back. This is a programme of national importance to the Council of Ministers because of its reach and potential impact and will be delivered by DEFA.

The four strategic objectives of the programme are: firstly, to simplify access to the planning system, including improving information, facilitating appropriate engagement, enhancing the pre-application service and publishing a customer charter for planning and development of a concierge service to assist investors and enhance transparency with real-time feedback on the status of applications. This will make it easier for people and investors to anticipate and navigate the application process with the planning service, speed things up and address issues early.

Secondly; to improve the planning process, ensuring the system is streamlined and properly resourced to deliver, with tracking of performance; and of note in that respect is the introduction of a major applications process for those projects where early identification and resolution of issues is vital. Furthermore, it has been identified that there is a need to embed economic assessment into determination of planning applications – a key consideration which has been missing – for assessment alongside social and environmental impacts, whilst the appeals process will be reviewed to help identify improvement areas and streamline the process. Our goal is to deliver a modern, customer-centred planning service to serve and enhance the Island.

Thirdly; we will align national planning policies, plans and strategies with the Island Plan, including deploying best practices from the 'town centre first' models for revitalising and rejuvenating the Island's urban communities, strengthening the evidence base, delivering the planning policy framework and reviewing and extending the scope of permitted development rights.

The purpose of this is to deploy best practices from town centre first models for revitalising and rejuvenating the Island's communities, with the goal to make better places for people and to kick-start regeneration in a way which is informed by the community. This includes proposals for an Isle of Man regeneration strategy and principles, and to undertake quality audits for better place making.

The final objective for this programme is to ensure attractiveness of brownfield developments to help protect the Island's greenfields and landscape beauty, including investigating policy levers

and other initiatives to stimulate brownfield and urban development and examining the section 13 agreement process and guidance for brownfield sites.

The initiatives to be investigated are key to removing the barriers that hold things back, in order to regenerate and revive places and communities from being derelict wastelands to something of value and purpose. This programme will also explore policy levers and other initiatives to stimulate brownfield and urban site development such as rates and tax incentives.

Mr President, the announcements and focus today are the sorts of initiatives that make a real difference, change the landscape of the Island and make places better for people. Property development can be a slow burner in terms of bringing benefits and this is where the Built Environment Reform Programme will enable us to quicken the pace of operational delivery in key areas.

Mr President, I am delighted to announce that we will be introducing some key improvements and innovations in the coming weeks, ranging from a trial for major applications, a customer charter and a performance dashboard within the Planning and Building Control Directorate, a brownfield site development grant support scheme, and plans for a dedicated workstream to develop an Island-wide regeneration strategy and deploy a town centre first toolkit to allow urban communities to assess the quality and needs of their local areas to inform decision making.

A major applications process will ensure that applications will have an appropriate level of focus and scrutiny, and an equally appropriate level of resource and co-ordination to assist in reaching an expeditious determination point, given their scale and importance to the Island. The trial will begin in August and run for 12 months.

A draft customer charter will be launched imminently, which will set out the standards Government will aspire to throughout the end-to-end planning process. Associated with the publication of service levels, applicants and the general public will also have the ability to see the volume and throughput status of applications posted as a weekly dashboard on the website.

I am also pleased to confirm that the Department for Enterprise is in the process of preparing further grant support for unoccupied urban sites where they are to be redeveloped for residential, retail or leisure purposes, in addition to the current support available for employment purposes. This will be for an initial period of two years and is designed to be a catalyst in ensuring that brownfield sites are commercially viable and, importantly, are developed in a timely way to support our Economic Strategy.

DfE is working with Treasury and will be announcing more on this directly in the coming weeks, with the aim that any changes required to schemes are brought to October's Tynwald. Furthermore, the planning policy team in the Cabinet Office is also nearing completion of an important piece of work on development viability that will be vital in underpinning how best to support and promote the development of brownfield sites.

Within Our Island Plan, there is an action to review Scotland's town centre first approach as a blueprint for regeneration. I am pleased to say that a comprehensive review has been undertaken, with kind support from our friends in Scotland, and the Council of Ministers will shortly be considering recommendations on how we could develop a similar approach for our Island to kick-start regeneration of our towns and villages, informed by local communities who know best the key needs of their areas. This is but the start and the programme will deliver other breakthrough changes over the next two years on which I will provide further details and progress updates in the autumn.

In parallel today, Mr President, I have also made a Statement on our proposed Economic Strategy. This clearly needs and highlights the need for investment in infrastructure – in particular, housing, commercial and leisure – and also highlights the need to leverage private sector appetite for investment.

It is through this reform programme, and through complementary initiatives like the Manx Development Corporation and the Housing and Communities Board that will speed things up, attract and capitalise on private sector investment, revitalise our towns and villages to build great communities.

This is already starting to happen. In the case of the Manx Development Corporation, having successfully achieved planning approval for the former Nurses' Home in Westmoreland Road, I am pleased to today convey the Manx Development Corporation's intention to launch a public consultation for a large, sustainable development on land within the Westmoreland Road vicinity. The proposed scheme will provide a mixture of residential properties, mixed-use facilities and high-quality community spaces, which will help regenerate and reinvigorate a substantial area of our capital city.

It is for all of these reasons that I commend this programme to you and I look forward to the vital progress that it will bring to our built environment that will enhance all of our lives, ensuring our Island is secure, vibrant and sustainable. I will provide a further update on progress in the autumn.

The President: I call on Mrs Christian.

Mrs Christian: Thank you, Mr President.

Would the Chief Minister like to take this opportunity to thank the Planning and Building Control Department, especially for continuing their hard work while it has been clearly identified in this report that our planning teams have been working with far fewer staff compared to other jurisdictions?

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: I would like to thank everybody who has been engaged on helping us put together this programme, Mr President. I think it outlines a number of strategic objectives and action points which are relevant both for planning policy and also to the Planning Department. I know that a lot of hard work is needed, but we have to bring about reform at a fairly rapid pace in order to ensure that we are maximising our opportunities.

Given what we have set out in our Island Plan, given what we have set out today in our Economic Strategy, it is, as I said in this Statement, a priority of this Council that this workstream retains a national level of importance and we are going to push as hard as we can to ensure delivery. And the Planning Department … their co-operation is valued, and we also need to continue to work together to achieve the objectives we are setting out.

The President: I call on Mr Glover.

Mr Glover: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

I welcome the Statement from the Chief Minister and agree there is currently too much red tape in there, but just a couple of questions. Will he be looking at interested party status and will common sense prevail a little bit more in that process? I have got one example, of the new pool at King William's College that is going through, where King William's College themselves have not been granted interested party status, which is on their land! Beggars belief.

There is also he mentioned documents such as obviously the Area Plans and the Island plans. I have got examples of inspectors who have just become fixed on those and those alone, when a much more common-sense solution is obvious to the local community, but the decision goes the other way, because they have stuck religiously to those plans. So I am just concerned about that as well.

Thank you.

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: I would say to the Hon. Member, without wishing to get drawn on specific applications, that we have been dogged I think over many years with perhaps applications that for one reason or another have been bogged down, either by direct policy, the way policy has been interpreted, or indeed by unnecessary bureaucracy. We need to make sure the law around planning is relevant and pertinent, but we also need to make sure that we have got simpler access to the planning system, that we are improving the planning process and its facets and that, most importantly, we are aligning our national planning policies, plans and strategies with the Island Plan and now with the Economic Strategy.

We have to be bolder, we have to be braver and along the way we need to be potentially much more decisive when it comes to realising and recognising the opportunities that often the private sector is bringing forward. And in terms of giving them confidence to continue to bring forward applications, but also to ensure that they are being dealt with professionally, effectively and efficiently. That will be part of this overall strategy that we are bringing forward.

The President: I call on Mrs Caine.

Mrs Caine: Thank you, Mr President.

I thank the Chief Minister for the Statement. I think it is really positive in terms of regenerating parts of our Island, particularly the focus on brownfield sites. But it does seem rather focused on big developers and not the community level.

I wondered where the Chief Minister saw off-grid living and accommodation, and land being allocated to permit off-grid communities, earthship communities or similar; how that will be facilitated. It is obviously not covered in this document. Will that have to await a strategic plan or a planning directive to make good on the undertaking from the Environment Minister previously given when authorising demolition of an off-grid resident's cabin?

While it is welcome that we are streamlining, getting rid of the red tape, in both the planning process, the planning application and the customer charter, what about more the community level? What hope could he offer to that level of community, either from a development of a piece of land or regeneration? Is this only applying to brownfield and urban development?

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: I think that is probably the core focus in terms of our Built Environment Reform Programme. It does what it says on the tin: it is about the built environment that we are seeking to achieve.

I would suggest that what she is talking about is something that could be part of a strategic plan review in terms of overall policy review, but also I think these types of things should be engaged with as part of overall area plans, particularly obviously more north and west consultation. In terms of renewables, the existing Strategic Plan does make provision, under Energy Policy 4, that:

> Development involving alternative sources of energy supply, including wind, water [solar] and tide power … will be judged against the environmental objectives and policies set out in [the] Plan … [and] will require the submission of an [environmental impact assessment].

Clearly I think this is something that is evolving. It is not so much about being off-grid, it is about self-generation in terms of how that sits alongside the access and supply that is being delivered by the grid in its existing framework. There is provision for this sort of thing to continue to be looked at, but I think it is part of the bigger planning policy forum.

The President: I call on Mrs Maska.

Mrs Maska: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

I do welcome this initiative and the Chief Minister's Statement today; just a couple of questions. I wonder is the Chief Minister confident that the human resources … I think in the Plan he does say that there will be extra staffing required and professional expertise. Is there a budget for that and are we confident that we can do that?

I wonder if he could also clarify, the major application process that is outlined, is that going to be in addition to, or in due course substitute the called-in process that is available under the Town and Country Planning Act 1999? That is for big applications and matters of more of a national interest and I am wondering what sits behind this major application piece of work.

Then there is an item which says there will be a review of conservation area boundaries. I wonder what the timescale might be for that? I think that is under 4.1.

Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

The President: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: I think all that is subject to further clarification, particularly around call-ins, and I will let you know that specific date.

I knew I had an answer ready for you at the first part of your question, but can you just remind me, sorry, Hon. Member?

Mrs Maska: The calling-in process, in parallel or superimposed over the major applications; the review of the conservation area boundaries; and also the staffing resources.

The Chief Minister: Sorry, yes, on the staff. Obviously, if we are going to be serious about this, get on, deal with major planning applications efficiently, effectively, provide that sort of concierge service, get people and help people to submit applications that are correct in the first instance and we hope that will lead, therefore, to better outcomes, quicker answers for people, I hope ultimately leading to the approvals process that will enable us to develop our brownfield sites, our urban areas and to successfully take that forward, those resources are needed. There is a budget allocation that has been made and we are going to continue to look at the strength and resources necessary to make sure that we deliver on what is fundamentally a critical part of our success moving forward, if we are going to be serious about achieving our economic targets that we have set out.

The President: Hon. Members, that concludes Item 7.

25. Local Government Act 1985 – Chester Street and Drumgold Street (Off-Street Car Park) (Revocation) Byelaws 2022 approved

The Minister for Infrastructure to move:

That the Chester Street and Drumgold Street (Off-Street Car Park) (Revocation) Byelaws 2022 be approved [SD 2022/0129] [MEMO].

The President: As agreed previously, we will now move out of sequence in our Order Paper and we will move to Item 25, Local Government Act 1985.

I call on the Minister for Infrastructure to move.

The Minister for Infrastructure (Mr Thomas): Thank you, Mr President.

I appreciate the acceptance and the willingness of Tynwald Court, Hon. Members, to actually allow me to bring these Items earlier.

Last year, the Department made an Off-Street Parking Places Order 2021, which had the effect of making the Chester Street (Off-Street Car Park) Byelaws 2007 and the Drumgold Street (Off-Street Car Park) Byelaws 2007 effectively redundant. Essentially, these byelaws act as a tidying up process for the legislation around Chester Street and Drumgold Street car parks since they were returned to the Department from Douglas Borough Council in 2021.

I invite Tynwald to approve these Byelaws under Section 30, paragraph (4) of the Local Government Act 1985. I beg to move the motion standing in my name.

The President: Mrs Sharpe.

Mrs Sharpe: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane, I beg to second.

The President: Hon. Members, I come to voting on this Item, Item 25, as set out on the Order Paper. All those in favour, please say aye; those against, please say no. The ayes have it. The ayes have it.

Therefore, Item 25 carried.

35. Harbours Act 2010 – Harbour (Dues and Charges) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations 2022 approved

The Minister for Infrastructure to move:

That the Harbour (Dues and Charges) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations 2022 [SD 2022/0151] [MEMO] be approved.

The President: We now move to Item 35, Harbours Act 2010.

I call on the Minister for Infrastructure to move.

The Minister for Infrastructure (Mr Thomas): Thank you, Mr President.

Just checking, I think you mean Item number 35?

The President: Yes, 35, I did say that. *(Interjections)*

The Minister: I beg to move the Harbour (Dues and Charges) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations 2022.

The Regulations before this Hon. Court today are an amendment to the Harbour (Dues and Charges) Regulations 2021. These Regulations amend the Harbour (Dues and Charges) Regulations 2021 by amending the cost of electricity so that it refers to the commercial tariff as published by the Manx Utilities Authority, as opposed to a specified numerical amount.

I beg to move the motion standing in my name.

The President: Mr Glover.

Mr Glover: I beg to second and reserve my remarks.

The President: Just a slight correction, I think – those Regulations are 2022.

Hon. Members, we come to voting on this Item.

Item 35, as set out on the Order Paper. All those in favour, please say aye; those against, please say no. The ayes have it. The ayes have it.

36.-37. Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2011 –
Shared Equity Purchase Assistance (First Home Fixed) (Amendment) Scheme 2022 approved;
Shared Equity Purchase Assistance (First Home Choice) (Amendment) Scheme 2022 approved

The Minister for Infrastructure to move:

36. That the Shared Equity Purchase Assistance (First Home Fixed) (Amendment) Scheme 2022 [SD 2022/0169] [MEMO] be approved.
37. That the Shared Equity Purchase Assistance (First Home Choice) (Amendment) Scheme 2022 [SD 2022/0170] [MEMO] be approved.

The President: Now, as we move on to Items 36 and 37, the Minister has asked for these to be moved together but voted separately. Is the Court content?

Members: Agreed.

The President: Thank you.
I call on the Minister for Infrastructure to move Items 36 and 37.

The Minister for Infrastructure (Mr Thomas): Thank you, Mr President; thank you, Hon. Members.

I know that all Hon. Members are acutely aware of the rapidly increasing price of residential property and the challenges being faced for many would-be purchasers. In particular, with its upper limit of £190,000, the First Home Choice Scheme is completely out of step with the reality of the market. That is why I am delighted to recommend, in its entirety, removing the upper financial limit for eligible applicants accessing open market purchases, allowing for the Choice Scheme to truly live up to its name.

For applicants perhaps less able to purchase their own home on the open market, and more in need of financial support, there are positive and wide-ranging amendments to the First Home Fixed Scheme, not least by significantly reducing the minimum amount of assistance available to 5% of the purchase price, instead of the current minimum of 20%, making it easier for applicants to access the assistance they require under the scheme. The other amendments proposed also have a positive impact and together combine to bring two workable, accessible and sustainable schemes which act to considerably widen the choice and improve the terms available to those who would use them.

I appreciate that for some these amendments do not yet go far enough. They are too limited in outlook, a little conservative in thinking. I would respond that I agree, and that is why I can advise this Hon. Court that assuming these interim measures are approved today, the Housing and Communities Board will be commencing a more detailed review in September this year, working in particular with the Department of Infrastructure but across Government more widely.

In the meantime, so that we can change things for the better *now*, I urge Hon. Members to support these amendments, as in doing so you will undoubtedly assist our Island residents on to that most important of steps, the path to owning your own home.

With that, Mr President, I beg to move.

The President: Mrs Sharpe.

Mrs Sharpe: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

I beg to second and reserve my remarks.

The President: I call on the Loayreyder.

The Speaker: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

I thank the Minister for taking the time and trouble to brief Members on these schemes and the changes.

One of the things I think he recognised what was sub-optimal in the schemes was that the data was not available to uprate this beyond the 2020 earnings limits. I suppose the commitment I am asking from the Minister is that as soon as the 2021 or 2022 data becomes available, will he return to this Court very soon thereafter to uprate this and update it as soon as possible, rather than waiting another two or three years to make sure that we continually keep pace with inflation?

I know that the long-term ambition was to index this, but in the meantime I just seek that commitment from the Minister.

The President: I call on Mrs Maska.

Mrs Maska: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

I just rise to support the motion for these two Shared Equity Schemes being amended. As an early measure, the Housing and Communities Board have recognised that we need to identify some early low-hanging fruit, and this is the first one of those projects. I do think this will open the door to a lot of purchasers who are just not able to access the schemes. One of the big pluses is taking the upper ceiling from the Choice Scheme, which means in the open market it is not limiting people as to what they can look at and what they can purchase.

The percentage of the minimal contribution from the Department goes down to 5%. In the past there has been too much … 20% was the minimum the Department could provide, which actually some people *had* to take up even though they may not need it. So I think again this makes it a much more sensible scheme. And the ability to pay in increments much lower than £5,000 – it goes down to £1,000 – and again that makes the schemes much more user-friendly, we hope.

In the interim, I will leave it to the Minister to respond to Mr Speaker's query on responding as soon as figures are available. But I would hope that the Housing and Communities Board will see it as a priority to update and come back to this Hon. Court as soon as we are able to do so.

Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

The President: I call on the mover to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President; and to all Hon. Members and the wider public who have been involved in the engagement around housing and around these initial amendment schemes. In particular, I would like to thank my seconder, Mrs Sharpe, who is politically responsible in the Department of Infrastructure for the Housing Division; and all the officers who have worked very closely over a long period to actually put together this scheme and are here to support people, I note, with that very most important choice of having a home and having a roof over your head before you can call it your home.

I would also like to thank Mrs Maska and the members of the Housing and Communities Board, Mr Crookall and others, because we have made a lot of progress in garnering cross-Government support and input from officers across that. I do think the only reason we are beginning to have some success is because we managed to embed ourselves in so many parts of Government, in Departments and Divisions of Departments, and I think that is an important factor.

On those lines – because although Mrs Maska said this is the first of the Housing Communities Board schemes – I want to commend as a positive vote for Item 26 later on on the Order Paper, the Item about Exceptional Needs Grants and Budgeting Loans. That is another example of

Mrs Maltby and the rest of Treasury getting hold of a very important Housing and Communities issue right at the beginning of this administration and working – behind the scenes, to a large extent, with Treasury – to bring forward the proposal at Item 26 as the second element of fruition.

And at the moment we have actually got something very exciting going on to do with homelessness, which the Department of Health and Social Care have been working on in terms of supported living and emergency housing. So I commend Item 26 and thank Mrs Maltby and the rest of Treasury for actually working on that Item with the Housing and Communities Board.

Just to answer the question that Mr Speaker asked, he is exactly right and I do hope that we can go further initially than he suggests, because I would like to think that when we come back with our next Orders we will be able to capture earnings uplift and housing market adjustments with indexing. It is just that our Department of Infrastructure did not start out on that process when they started getting Treasury concurrence and engaging the Attorney General's, and it was one step too far at this stage. But I have not met anybody who disagrees with the fact that wouldn't it be so much better if we can index link the income thresholds and the housing price links?

So as soon as we have earnings uplifts, I do make that commitment and that undertaking, and I do it for the long term not just for the short term.

I beg to move.

The President: Hon. Members, we come to voting on these two Items.

I put first the Item 36 as set out on the Order Paper. All those in favour, please say aye; those against, please say no. The ayes have it. The ayes have it. Item 36 carried.

I now put to you Item 37 as set out on the Order Paper. All those in favour, please say aye; those against, please say no. The ayes have it. The ayes have it.

Item 37 carried.

38.-40. Local Government Act 1985 –
Western Swimming Pool Board (Amendment) Order 2022 approved;
Northern Swimming Pool Board (Amendment) Order 2022 approved;
Southern Swimming Pool Board (Amendment) (No.2) Order 2022 approved

The Minister for Infrastructure to move:

38. That the Western Swimming Pool Board (Amendment) Order 2022 [SD 2022/0173] [MEMO] be approved.
39. That the Northern Swimming Pool Board (Amendment) Order 2022 [SD 2022/0174] [MEMO] be approved.
40. That the Southern Swimming Pool Board (Amendment) (No.2) Order 2022 [SD 2022/0172] [MEMO] be approved.

The President: The Minister has asked that Items 38, 39 and 40 be moved together, but voted separately. Is the Court content?

Members: Agreed.

The President: Thank you.

I call on the Minister for Infrastructure to move 38, 39 and 40.

The Minister for Infrastructure (Mr Thomas): Thank you, Mr President; and to the Court for allowing me to move the three Items together.

The Southern Swimming Pool Board approached the Department to advise that due to several issues – namely, pool closures brought about by the pandemic and the restrictions introduced as a consequence, the need for a large amount of maintenance required to the swimming pool building to ensure it is fit for purpose, and more recently by large increases in fuel bills – that they are facing major financial difficulties. In the light of that, Members will be aware that the Department of Education, Sport and Culture announced some months ago that an independent review would be carried out on swimming pools this year; and the Department is seeking to assist the Swimming Pool Boards, in the meantime, by making this new Amendment Order.

The Western and Northern Swimming Pool Boards also approached the Department to advise that due to several issues – namely, pool closures brought about by the pandemic, and the restrictions introduced as a consequence, and more recently by the large increases in fuel bills – that they are facing financial difficulties.

The Local Government Act, section 7(5), provides that the Department of Infrastructure is responsible for bringing forward any new Amendment Orders associated with Joint Boards such as the Swimming Pool Board Orders. The proposed Order will increase funding from the local rates – or at least it *could* increase funding from local rates – from 2.5 pence in the pound to six pence in the pound for the 2023-24 financial year; and it could increase in each subsequent year by a further penny in the pound up to a maximum capped rate of eight pence in the pound. So, in other words, it is absolutely important to understand that what we are asking through this Order is for a maximum rate of six pence in the pound to be estimated by the boards in their requests to the local authorities, who are members of these boards, to levy for the next financial year.

There is also an amendment that will allow the Western and Northern Swimming Pool Boards, in exceptional circumstances, to request additional payments throughout the year from the constituent authorities. This will be at the discretion of the local authorities, of course, and I stress again that part of the Order is different in the Southern Swimming Pool Order compared to the Northern and Western Orders.

So, in summary, this Order is essentially acting as a short-term assistance to the boards for next year, while the longer-term future of the pools is determined, and the governance around those pools, and the funding and the terms and conditions, perhaps, and all of the other arrangements around those boards is investigated in the independent review and thereafter, in the politics this summer – so that we can have more realistic estimates, better governance and better security in the future for swimming pools in our community, including in the east.

In summary, the Western Swimming Pool Board Order 1999 would be amended by the proposed new Order; the Northern Swimming Pool Board Order 2000 would be amended by the proposed new Order; and, finally, the Southern Swimming Pool Board Order 2000 would be amended by the new Order.

I beg to move all three Orders standing in my name.

The President: Mr Glover.

Mr Glover: I beg to second.

I just want to re-emphasise that 2000 was the last time any local authority rates went up, they have been stuck at 2½ since then. So this is just allowing local authorities now to have that flexibility.

The memo was, I think, an error; in that it was, I think, a copy-and-paste from when the Order was originally meant to be coming. But this is a fundamental change in this, that the 2.5 pence to six pence is discretionary. It does not mean to say it goes up from 2½ to six, it can be anywhere in between there, or stay at 2½. I just want to make that clear.

It is also then going to increase, because it hasn't over the time, so that outer limit of six pence will go up by a penny, I think it is – no, 0.1 of a penny, isn't it, that it is going to go up to? So it is a *very* gradual increase to a maximum shelf-life of eight pence. That is the structuring. It is really important that people understand that: it is not going up to six pence, it is discretionary. It is up

to individual boards in the north, the west and the south. The south have already factored that in because it is part of the battle; this is part of the armoury to try and save the Southern Pool.

Thank you, Eaghtyrane.

The President: I call on Mr Johnston.

Mr Johnston: Thank you, Mr President.

Notwithstanding the discretionary nature of the further contribution from local authorities to their Pool Boards, the correspondence I have had from my constituents – which I believe is defendable – wants to see the results of the independent review into pools before any changes are made, especially taking into account the inconsistency of funding models currently in place.

I want to see the results of that review, so I will not be voting for this amendment …

A Member: Hear, hear.

The President: I call on Dr Haywood.

Dr Haywood: Thank you, Mr President.

Could the Minister just confirm that this is all really about enabling, and it is about giving the Pool Boards the same sort of powers as our local amenity site boards have? Those boards are comprised of local authority members who, in their own boards, set the *rates* for where they come, and then this is just an extension of allowing them some leeway on setting the rates within those devolved boards.

Thank you.

The President: I call on Hon. Loayreyder.

The Speaker: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane; and I thank Mr Glover for clarifying the financial structure.

I perhaps disagree with Mr Johnston's take on this, given what we found out this morning about the somewhat questionable legitimacy of the review, based on very limited engagement and in short order. The one order, of course, that the Minister will notice is missing from the north, south and west mix is an *eastern* rate for leisure. Would this require primary legislation or would the Minister be able to, if he wished, bring an Order in a similar vein as this at a subsequent sitting?

The President: I call on Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President.

This Order is a significant move forward and the first since the year 2000. It ensures that the local authorities retain the right to increase funding if they *choose*, and this gives them that option. The change will also enable a funding stream that should have been switched on early, to actively be switched on if that is required. It would also have been better if funding could have been found elsewhere, but we need to be realistic. This is an option before us today that will work and help.

Again, waiting for the review would be a nice option; but again, the sooner we take this forward the more clarity and certainty we will have. In the short term, it places the Southern's Board in a stronger position and it will help them deal with imminent challenges.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: I call on the mover to reply.

Mr Thomas: Thank you, Mr President; and to all Members who have contributed both here in this Court today and also in discussions by email. I also want to thank the Commissioners, the

Clerks, we had a good discussion of this at the Clerks' Forum yesterday. That is the way that good law is made, by engagement and by those directly affected actually being involved.

So I got some excellent questions there. I can assure Mr Johnston that the independent review is important and that any inconsistency of funding models that are found in that review – or exist, even if they are not found in that review, given its terms of reference – need to be explored. Good law follows policy and I do hope that we can have this policy debate about the funding of swimming pools and other recreation and leisure facilities.

That leads on to Mr Speaker's question. I have not got that in front of me and I have not taken specific legal advice on this, but my recollection from my preparation from all of these Orders – none of which I have had the chance to use before – is that, basically, this goes back to the Recreation and Leisure Act 1998, which empowers people to make orders. Then, in 2006, there was a Local Government Act section which was put in place, which is not yet in force, to do with the policy behind it.

So why wouldn't this independent review lead into a wider consideration of the nature of how we go about funding Recreation and Leisure on the Isle of Man? Also, how we look to make sure that the governance and the democracy and the regulations and the controls … And, most importantly – and this is to build on Dr Haywood's point – to make sure that the production of estimates is reasonable and timely and is accurate, and happens before the budgets get placed.

At the Clerks' Forum yesterday a particular clerk said that they had not heard about what the rate would be for swimming pools *ever* in the period of the life of the regional swimming pools, until March or so, after the rates have been set by the end of January. That cannot be right, that is not good governance, that is not even good democracy. That is just wrong. So, therefore, we do need a fundamental review of all of these things.

I thank my seconder. I thank everybody in the Department who has been involved with this. And I beg to move.

The President: Hon. Members, we are going to vote here on three Items, but separately.

I put to you first Item 38, as set out on the Order Paper. All those in favour, please say aye; those against, please say no. The ayes have it.

A division was called for and electronic voting resulted as follows:

In the Keys – Ayes 22, Noes 2

FOR	**AGAINST**
Dr Allinson	Mr Johnston
Mr Ashford	Mr Peters
Mrs Barber	
Mrs Caine	
Mr Callister	
Mr Cannan	
Mrs Christian	
Mrs Corlett	
Mr Crookall	
Ms Edge	
Ms Faragher	
Mr Glover	
Dr Haywood	
Mr Hooper	
Ms Lord-Brennan	
Mrs Maltby	
Mr Moorhouse	
Mrs Poole-Wilson	
Mr Smith	
Mr Speaker	
Mr Thomas	

Mr Wannenburgh

The Speaker: Mr President, in the Keys, 22 for, 2 against.

In the Council – Ayes 9, Noes 0

FOR	**AGAINST**
Miss August-Hanson	None
Mr Craine	
Mr Greenhill	
Mr Henderson	
Mrs Kelsey	
The Lord Bishop	
Mrs Maska	
Mr Mercer	
Mrs Sharpe	

The President: Legislative Council, 9 for, none against. Therefore the motion carries.

We now move on to voting on Item 39, as set out on the Order Paper. All those in favour, please say aye; those against, please say no.

A division was called for and electronic voting resulted as follows:

In the Keys – Ayes 22, Noes 2

FOR	**AGAINST**
Dr Allinson	Mr Johnston
Mr Ashford	Mr Peters
Mrs Barber	
Mrs Caine	
Mr Callister	
Mr Cannan	
Mrs Christian	
Mrs Corlett	
Mr Crookall	
Ms Edge	
Ms Faragher	
Mr Glover	
Dr Haywood	
Mr Hooper	
Ms Lord-Brennan	
Mrs Maltby	
Mr Moorhouse	
Mrs Poole-Wilson	
Mr Smith	
Mr Speaker	
Mr Thomas	
Mr Wannenburgh	

The Speaker: Again, Eaghtyrane, 22 for, and 2 against, in the Keys

In the Council – Ayes 9, Noes 0

FOR	**AGAINST**
Miss August-Hanson	None
Mr Craine	
Mr Greenhill	
Mr Henderson	
Mrs Kelsey	

The Lord Bishop
Mrs Maska
Mr Mercer
Mrs Sharpe

The President: In Legislative Council 9 for, none against. Therefore, Item 39 is carried.

We now move on to voting on Item 40, the motion as set out on the Order Paper. All those in favour, please say aye; those against, please say no. The ayes have it. The ayes have it.

Item 40 therefore carried.

8. Manx Utilities Authority – Additional expenditure for Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy – Phase 2 – Debate commenced

The Chair of the Manx Utilities Authority to move:

That Tynwald approves Manx Utilities Authority incurring expenditure of £16,950,000 in excess of the previous Tynwald vote of £23,500,000 to a total not exceeding £40,450,000 in respect of the completion of Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy – Phase 2. [MEMO]

The President: Hon. Members, we return back to our ordinary sequence in the Order Paper and now we move on to Item 8, Manx Utilities Authority, and I call on the Caairliagh, Chair of the Manx Utilities Authority to move.

The Chair of the Manx Utilities Authority (Mr Callister): Thank you, Mr President.

I am delighted to be in a position, as the Chair of Manx Utilities, to bring to this Court a financial motion to finally complete a hugely important programme for our Island.

If the additional funding is approved here today, it will allow Manx Utilities to take the necessary steps in order to put an end to the unacceptable discharging of raw sewage into our wonderful marine environment.

The original strategy for the Integration and Recycling of the Island's Sewage (IRIS) was approved by this Court back in 1992 before a further review of the IRIS Master Plan was undertaken in October 2007, which resulted in the development of a Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy for this Island.

Phase 1 of that Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy was completed between 2011 and 2017, but my enthusiasm for this motion here today is tinged with some sadness that we were unable to complete Phase 2 of the project during the last administration, which was a promise made to the people of Peel, Laxey and Baldrine back in March 2019.

The objective as set by the then Programme for Government was within our grasp, but alas the project teams were unable to gain the necessary planning approvals desired during the last administration.

It should be noted that in both Peel and Laxey the proposals were discussed at length with the planning teams prior to any submission, and it was believed that the planning officers viewed both applications favourably. However, due to the extent of community opposition to the proposed scheme for Laxey down at the Cairn site by the harbour, Manx Utilities decided to reappraise all options, and therefore decided not to appeal the planning decision – and as the Chair of Manx Utilities, I fully endorse the decision taken.

Although Manx Utilities are very keen to resolve the final phase of this important project for the people of this Island, we felt that further proposals would need to be supported by evidence of thorough evaluation.

In respect of Peel, the planning inspector reviewed our proposals at Glenfaba House, which had appeared to be the perfect location for the Peel works. However, what was originally seen as one of the site's main strengths became its fundamental weakness. An unacceptable number of the trees covering the site that would assist in screening it from all sides were required to be removed, and the inspector concluded that more needed to be done to ensure there were no other, more suitable sites available.

As I have said, the Manx Utilities board resolved that a full detailed appraisal of all of the potential options should be undertaken, including a review of any 'pump away' options to ensure that the business case for a regional strategy remained valid. This has involved a wide scale review of potential sites, most of which were identified in previous studies, along with some additional locations offered as part of a 'call for sites' exercise.

The review has involved a huge amount of work in assessing and scoring each option against a set criteria, and for the highest ranked sites the completion of concept designs and the calculation of both 25- and 50-year net present values. A hierarchy of preferred sites has been developed with the sites ranked on a 70/30 quality/cost basis, prioritising environmental and carbon impact. A validation of the ranking using a 50/50 evaluation basis was also carried out.

Mr President, as I referenced earlier, in both catchments, Manx Utilities were challenged to consider a pump away solution in which all flows are pumped back to the sewage treatment works at Meary Veg. I can confirm that the business case for the regional solution is confirmed and that pumping back to Meary Veg is not Manx Utilities' preferred option, as our calculations have proved it to be more costly.

For each catchment, nearly £5 million of additional capital would be required in the first year for the pump away option, with each of these options being much more expensive over a 50-year evaluation period. In Garff in particular, a 50-year net present value evaluation shows that the pump away option is around £6 million more expensive. To change course now would also add significant delay in delivering this key infrastructure beyond the proposed completion date of 2024 – and that simply is not fair on the people of Peel, Laxey and Baldrine, who want these works completed as soon as possible.

In line with the new requirements of the Climate Change Act, the project team have also undertaken detailed carbon assessments that have also highlighted that a pump away solution has a significantly higher carbon cost across its lifetime, compared to a regional approach. Therefore a pump away solution would not support our broader objective to support climate improvement initiatives and to reduce our own carbon emissions.

Manx Utilities has also engaged fully with the local communities, with local authorities and elected Members for Garff and Peel to ensure as much information is available as possible, along with answering questions and addressing any concerns.

For Garff, whilst separate treatment works were originally proposed for the catchments of Laxey and Baldrine, the review of sites has identified options to deliver a combined scheme between both villages, which we believe addresses the concerns raised within the community about the proposed location of the treatment works.

Our modelling indicates that the discharge from the works, which will utilise the existing Laxey outfall pipe, will not prevent the bathing water from receiving a classification of 'Excellent' under the Water Quality (Bathing Water Standards and Objectives) Scheme 2021.

As I have previously stated, pumping infrastructure will be required at both the Cairns site in Laxey and the Glen Garwick estate in Baldrine, both of which are now in Manx Utilities' ownership, thereby enabling us to move quickly, should approval be received by this Hon. Court today. Mr President, it is worth mentioning that infrastructure will be required at both of these sites irrespective of the final solution.

On completion of the scheme, the balance of the Glen Garwick estate will be sold and the proceeds returned to Treasury. Calculations and analysis have concluded that a combined works offers an excellent solution for both Garff and the Island as a whole, in terms of cost, environmental impact and bathing water quality.

Claims by local interest groups that the pump away option is far cheaper than regional are without basis, and I ask Hon. Members of this Court to trust the professional engineers and the industry recognised experts with regard to the calculations and conclusions in respect of the costs and the environmental impact relating to Phase 2 of the Regional Sewerage Treatment Strategy.

For Peel, the review has concluded that there are three sites including one within the town boundary, which offers a better solution in terms of a combined cost and quality score than Glenfaba House. Should the procurement of these sites not be achievable for values deemed acceptable by the Government Valuer, then we will revert back to Glenfaba House, having evidence for the planning process that all other options have now been fully explored.

We are also expecting the performance of the plant proposed for Peel to achieve Excellent bathing water quality for normal operations and Excellent or Good standards for storm flows, and it is our intention to closely monitor the performance. If required, additional performance enhancement options can be considered, such as further surface water separation and/or the outfall pipe extension.

Members will also see reference within the motion to works required at Meary Veg. These works will duplicate sludge import facilities at Meary Veg and provide greater storage of dried sewage sludge, which will increase the efficiency and the resilience, therefore reducing operating costs and risks of failure at the plant.

Mr President, I know Members and the wider Manx community will be concerned about the increase in costs from the original £23.5 million approved by this Hon. Court back in 2019, to the £40.45 million requested here today. A direct comparison of these two figures would not be comparing apples with apples. Significant expenditure on professional fees and land acquisition were funded separately from that original amount, and we have now also included additional works to allow for the processing of the Raggatt Leachate – something I am sure you will all absolutely agree is vital, and it also fulfils recommendation 4 of the Environment and Infrastructure Policy Review Committee report from May 2018, which I chaired.

There is also a significant amount of additional infrastructure required for the Garff strategy in the form of pipelines and pumping stations. Notwithstanding this, there has been an unprecedented increase in general construction costs over the last three years, and this does make up a significant percentage of the increase. Unfortunately, if we want to resolve this situation now, this cannot be avoided. In any case, it is highly unlikely that construction costs will reduce in the near future, so the sooner we can put contracts in place for these schemes, the better it will be for our finances and the environment.

The cost estimate presented to this Hon. Court back in 2007 for the completion of the whole Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy was £85.1 million. With Phase 1 of the Strategy completed £11 million under budget for just over £28 million and the works completed at Ballagarey and Ballaugh and planned for Crosby, Glen Vine, St Johns and Sulby, our total expenditure is now expected to be in the region of £85 million, which is still in line with the original cost estimate.

As the Chair of Manx Utilities, I am very concerned that we need to get on with this programme, and you may hear arguments today that we should undertake a further independent review of the Board's costings and evaluations. Unfortunately, any request to go through further financial assessment and valuation will, without doubt, mean that solving the problem once and for all is unlikely to happen within this administration.

As I have mentioned previously, that is not fair on the majority of the people living in Laxey, Baldrine and Peel or for our visitors to our Island or for local residents who use these two very important beaches. Manx Utilities is 100% behind its proposals and is absolutely confident in the appraisals which have been undertaken.

Mr President, as an Island we have been discussing the recycling of the Island's sewage waste for over 30 years, but Members' support here today will help bring us closer to ceasing the discharge of raw sewage into the sea on the remaining three locations of our Island's coastline.

I stand before you today totally endorsing the board's methods and appraisals, and with your support Manx Utilities can progress these schemes and move forward to deliver on our UNESCO Biosphere pledge of working together for a sustainable future.

Mr President, I beg to move the motion standing in my name.

The President: I call on Mr Greenhill.

Mr Greenhill: Thank you, Mr President.

I beg to second the motion before us today and to confirm that the Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy has been endorsed by this Hon. Court. No changes in that policy at all are being proposed today.

The motion is required because, as everyone in this Hon. Court and everyone on this Island is fully aware, costs have been rising dramatically since 2019 when the budget for this project was approved, and additional costs are being incurred due to the originally selected sites being turned down in the planning process.

I would like to put the increase of close to £17 million to the budget approved in March 2019 on Phase 2 into some context. Firstly, I would like to give some detail on the make-up of that increase. Alternative parcels of land had to be purchased for the project following the results of the planning in both Garff and Peel, that is at an estimated cost of around £1.2 million, that will have to be purchased. As those sites, and works required at them, have now significantly changed, then additional professional fees will be incurred, including ground investigations, environmental impact assessments, outline and detailed designs. These are estimated at £1.5 million. The infrastructure at the new sites, due to their location, will require additional pump stations and other works that were not initially budgeted for. In addition, since 2019, material, fuel and labour costs have increased dramatically due to both COVID and the war in Ukraine.

The calculations of the costs in this submission are based on current prices uplifted by an appropriate inflation adjustment, assuming that construction commences in summer 2023. The total projected cost for all of these elements of the budget for Garff, Peel and the work to be done at Meary Veg, is £8.5 million. After the original budget was approved for Phase 2, initial investigations on potential sites in Peel by MUA have identified some challenging ground conditions and additional work that will have to be done, which will require additional funding of around £2.9 million.

In the work proposed for Peel, a new site access road will be needed to ensure that construction and operational traffic does not have to pass through the town. The MUA believe that this road should be widened so that passing places are not necessary. An additional £300,000 has been put in the revised budget for this to be completed.

Given that so many changes now need to be made to the original costed plans for Garff and Peel, there are also a number of other additional expenses that will be incurred to finalise the regional sewage treatment projects. These include an additional vactor tanker, which is a very special truck to access the Cairn site to clean out the pumping station. There will be additional works at the Peel Promenade Pumping Station to allow safe access to the storm screen, and enhanced traffic management works in both catchments. The cost of these items is estimated to be £900,000.

The standard calculation to set the contingency on the additional costs that I have just explained, has also been included in these amounts, which comes up to £450,000. The above items total up to just over £16 million. There may be a cost of £900,000 regarding the leachate in infrastructure, which has been requested from MUA by the Department of Infrastructure and therefore included in our estimates. This *would* bring the total up to £16.95 million, as stated in the motion, *but* this £900,000, if deemed to be required by the Department of Infrastructure, will be recharged to them.

As an offset to the £16 million additional costs that I have just outlined, there is also potential to recoup between £2 million and £3 million from the sale of elements of the two properties

already acquired for this profit. So the actual projected increase based on these points is therefore expected to be somewhere between £13 million and £14 million. The budget for Phase 1 of this project was set at £39 million, but was actually delivered under budget for £28 million, a saving of £11 million.

I appreciate that I may be accused of oversimplifying matters in a very complex two-phase, multi-million pound project, but today's motion projects that the total Project, Phase 1 and Phase 2, which was initially budgeted at £62.5 million is currently actually projected to be delivered at £65.05 million, only 4% over budget.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: I call on Mr Peters.

Mr Peters: Thank you, Mr President.

Whatever the benefits claimed – and thanks very much to the Chairman of the MUA for giving us the detail on this – I have to say I find it unacceptable that we are being asked to vote an extra £17 million for a scheme that was budgeted to cost just over £23 million. I understand from my colleague, for whom I have some sympathy, that options have changed and costs have risen in the interim – but to almost double the price? I believe that the entire sewage treatment plant, and the IRIS scheme in particular, has been an omnishambles going back decades.

A year ago, on the doorstep, I promised voters that I would try to hold the Government to account for these disasters, but I am told that there are no villains here. Like with the Liverpool Landing Stage, I feel pressured to vote in favour rather than waste money that has already been spent. But if I have learnt one thing in my first 10 months in this Parliament it is that in the Isle of Man, Ministers, officers and Departments start with a clear brief and a clear budget and then employ expensive consultants and find out what the public wants, then modify the original brief and have to ask for more money.

We must do better with these things, Mr President. We must learn to line up our ducks before finding out that they cannot swim, because the people who put us in here are sick of hearing the line, 'Mistakes were made. Lessons were learned. Moving forward.'

Thank you, sir.

A Member: Hear, hear.

The President: I call on Dr Haywood.

Dr Haywood: Thank you, Mr President.

The need to prevent the raw sewage entering the sea in Laxey and Peel has never been more pressing. We have allowed considerable housing developments to take place in Peel and as the population has expanded, so too has the problem.

Hon. Members, I have the totally unenviable position that I have visited both of these sewage outfalls in Peel and Laxey, and I have seen for myself the impact. I am not going to offer to take anyone there. Despite the rough screening that occurs to remove those items that should not be flushed, you know when you are in the right area as the sewage-related plastic debris is scattered across the seabed. The fresh water from the outfall comes out with some force and as it is less dense than seawater, it floats to the surface. That is around three million litres of water a day.

If you look and where you find the seagulls – they are the curious creatures that are looking to spot any visual disturbances on the water, and settle to see what is going on in the hope of finding food – that is where the freshwater flume rises to. Look for the patch of seagulls, about 40 m inshore is where the pipe ends. In Laxey, the outfall is more in the tide and is therefore a quicker dispersal and the seagull-attracting effect is less, but the same disgraceful discharge is happening.

We know that raw sewage presents a risk to human health. There is a finding that goes back to the early days of an epidemiologist called Jon Snow – not to be confused with the actor or the

broadcaster – who removed the handle from a water pump to stop an outbreak of cholera in the 1850s. The Victorians embarked on some big engineering projects to take sewage away from drinking water and away from homes, and sadly that mostly involved dumping it in the sea as they had no other options. We now know better and we now can do better. What was the best solution a hundred years ago is not the best solution any more.

These projects have been attempted and failed so many times, and as a consequence we have exposed hundreds of people to gastrointestinal infections, hepatitis, respiratory diseases and ear infections. We have allowed people to catch and consume fish and shellfish from these areas. It is not acceptable exposing people to these risks for any longer than absolutely necessary. We have a fantastic marine environment that all our residents and visitors should be able to safely enjoy wherever they are around the Island.

I am against delaying these developments any further, because my conscience will not allow people to be put at risk any more. I have looked at the plans with my scientific head on – I have been and seen the pipes, for heaven's sake – and I especially looked at whether the treated effluents will meet bathing water standards. I am content that the plans do achieve that status, and they will allow Laxey and Peel to promote their fantastic and safe natural environment for everyone to enjoy.

I am only ashamed that in 2022 we are still having this debate about whether this is necessary and whether we should fund it.

Several Members: Hear, hear.

The President: I call on Mr Glover.

Mr Glover: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

I have come in here quite open-minded as to where I am going to go with voting here today, I remain to be persuaded on this. I know that the people of Peel and Laxey and Baldrine are sick to death of this and want to get on with things, but I think we need to … There were a lot of briefings, and I thank the MUA for that, but all Members need to ask those questions in Tynwald that were asked in the briefings, so it is on *Hansard* and a matter of record. I would appeal to Members to do that here today.

I have found answers that have been given at times and, as any opposition, somewhat dismissive – 'Oh, they are just like that all the time.' That, to me, raises my hackles and I want to find out more. So I *am* undecided. I do want to know in much more detail how much the joined-up approach to the IRIS approach will be, so that we can compare. I think that is essential. We do not even know where the sites are, exactly. It is not public. *(Interjections)*

I am also concerned about the storm overspill. We have got the figures from Douglas of 51 times in 2019, and 66 times in 2020. Where are the figures for 2021 and what impacts are we expecting in Peel and Laxey? We have not got that detail.

I do thank Mr Greenhill MLC for a much more detailed explanation now of the rising costs, because we have not had that detailed out. I know, if only we had the capital projects unit. I am concerned about the governance of this project, because the last thing I want to see, as Mr Peters has alluded to, is this turning into another Liverpool Landing Stage, or indeed the prom, or indeed the water slides.

I also want to know the questions as to why we are not striving *now* for Blue Flag excellence in Peel? A solution is offering and saying that we will get mostly Excellent in Laxey, it will be Good in Peel and bordering on Excellent, but it also talks about then revisiting that scheme if we are not there. I just want to know exactly why we are not going for the Blue Flag excellence in Peel.

I would like to thank the Chair of the Manx Utilities for his demeanour in the way he has spoken today, but I do have questions and concerns.

The President: I call on Mr Mercer.

Mr Mercer: Thank you, Mr President.

I would like to thank the Chairman of the MUA for bringing this motion today, but I do have a couple of concerns, a couple of questions, which I hope he can answer.

Since Tynwald agreed the Regional Sewerage Strategy in 2008, planning applications for regional processing have been rejected in Peel and in Laxey. Surely at that point it would have made sense to come back to Tynwald to debate that regional strategy to either re-affirm, refine or refute the direction of travel. There are a number of legislative, strategic and material changes that have taken place since 2008, many of which have the potential to affect how we deal with sewage and waste. It makes sense to me that a 14-year old sewage disposal strategy at least be reviewed, to check that it is still valid and compliant.

The lower cost of regional processing was highlighted as the reason that strategy made sense back in 2008. Doesn't the continued escalation of costs call this into question?

I cannot, though, ignore the wishes of the people of Laxey and Peel to be able to designate their bathing waters and to finally be able to swim in waters that are not blighted by raw sewage. The schemes that we are being asked to approve today should improve the water quality in both of those locations, but can the Chairman give the people of Peel and Laxey the assurance that their water will finally be safe to swim and bathe in, and will the scheme support their wishes to pursue Blue Flag status in future?

Lastly, Eaghtyrane, I would ask the Chairman that if the planning applications for Peel and Laxey were to fail again, that he brings that debate on the question of regional or centralised sewage treatment back to Tynwald.

Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

The President: I call on Mrs Caine.

Mrs Caine: Thank you, Mr President.

I start with a sincere thank you to the Chair of Manx Utilities for his and his organisation's continued engagement with Garff political representatives and the Best 4 Laxey Bay group over the years. However, at times it has felt rather a one-way street. Sometimes with Manx Utilities being secretive on what information could be disclosed 'for commercially sensitive reasons' was the normal excuse. We also do not have the benefit of seeing the environmental impact assessment, as that is considered sensitive until it goes forward as part of the planning application. I do find that baffling.

I believe that the Manx Utilities was aware of its planning failing last time in bidding to put a treatment works on the Cairn site. It failed as it was the wrong scheme in the wrong place. But Manx Utilities was also criticised for not having investigated other solutions, and it prompts the feeling that some of this process serves that purpose, enabling Manx Utilities to discount other schemes.

But we need more of a box-ticking exercise when it comes to Peel and Laxey, two of our most popular bathing beaches. In spite of all the engagement and after several more questions and correspondence in recent weeks – again, thank you to the Chair for his courtesy in responding – I am not confident that the scheme before us today is the right one for either Garff or Peel. I will therefore be moving an amendment to seek to have the proposed schemes assessed by CoMin before we progress any further.

My amendment acknowledges the need to *stop* the discharge of untreated sewage into Manx Water; and notes Manx Utilities' proposal to seek funding for *regional* sewage treatment schemes in Garff and Peel. We are all aware of the imperative need to stop the discharge of untreated sewage into our bays, but I would ask Members to support, that Tynwald:

> … is of the opinion that the Council of Ministers should commission external expert evaluation of the costs and environmental merits of continuing with the Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy and the comparative costs and merits of pumping away to Meary Veg for both Peel and Laxey and Baldrine;

The amendment, further:

> calls on the Council of Ministers by the last day of October 2022 to publish the external expert evaluation as a report to Tynwald.

– so would not be holding up in terms of the timing very much, if the Manx Utilities are so confident that they have the right scheme this time.

Hon. Members, there is a wish in the community from residents and visitors, for Government to just get on with it and stop raw sewage going out into Laxey Bay and into Peel. However, with a more than 70% increase in costs over the three years since Manx Utilities last gained approval, I feel we need to pause briefly and subject the matter to proper scrutiny, and whether it is a recalculation or correcting a miscalculation, £40 million for the last two areas of the Island to be provided with sewage treatment is equivalent, I think, to the initially mooted cost of IRIS back in the 1990s – the All-Island Sewage Scheme. If only they *had* got on with it in 2008, when Tynwald approved spending £800,000 for the installation of the IRIS main from Onchan to Baldrine as part of Isle of Man Water Authorities main-laying scheme.

A total of £800,000 to link Baldrine to Onchan! This was approved unanimously after Minister Anderson … It was the Department of Transport then rather than Manx Utilities that looked after the sewerage infrastructure, and the Minister said, quote: 'The IRIS review report' – referred to by Mr Callister – 'concluded that there was no site in lower Laxey or Baldrine for a sewage treatment works. Therefore, the preferred solution for dealing with the sewage flows from these two catchments is to transfer sewage from Laxey and Baldrine to Meary Veg for treatment. This involves the construction of pumping stations and a transmission mains to link into the Onchan sewerage system.'

Despite that previous review's findings, Manx Utilities attempted to bring forward a scheme to site a wholly inappropriate treatment works next to Laxey's historic harbour in the heart of a conservation area. At least they went back to the drawing board after that, and did not attempt to appeal it. But to come to us now with an increase of almost £17 million … This is lottery money.

Can we have confidence in the figures being accurate? There is a sad history of inaccuracies being presented in Manx Utilities when they say they are delivering Tynwald's approved policy. It was in 2007 that Tynwald was asked to approve the adoption of regional sewage treatment provision. This was on the basis that it was less expensive. A review of the IRIS Master Plan was produced by Mouchel Parkman to justify the adoption of regional provision based on substantial cost savings of around £10 million at Peel. The document listed six options: options five and six were compared. There are only four capital cost prices and the Dalby sewage treatment works is listed at £480,000.304 in option five; and £4.5 million in option 6! A £4.1 million typing error.

There were other omissions and errors which, if presented correctly, would have shown remaining with the original IRIS plan was cheaper than regional, by £2 million. This time around Manx Utilities kindly allowed a Baldrine resident, a qualified accountant, to assess the costings on behalf of the Best 4 Laxey Bay community group. He was not permitted to take away the costings but to study them in the presence of Manx Utilities. His assessment suggested that the pump-away to Meary Veg option would be £3 million less costly than the combined regional treatment proposed – and not £6 million more. Manx Utilities responded and said, 'This is not so!'

I am not an engineer or an accountant, but applying practical common sense to the proposal for Laxey, which I do know, there are some aspects that just do not add up for me. For instance, a storm tank with UV treatment will be installed at the Cairn site by the harbour for both schemes. There could be up to 60 storm spills in a season, so this is required. Anyway, why do they not get on with it?

Both schemes would require sewage to be pumped uphill via Old Laxey Hill to the Main Road. The combined treatment would then need Baldrine sewage to be pumped from Clay Head Road back to Laxey and then on to the – as yet undisclosed – site for treatment in a combined treatment works. This is likely to require pumping further uphill to a piece of land above, in Lonan, instead

of the 5.6 k to pump from Baldrine to Onchan and then link up with Meary Veg. If there is an issue joining the system at Port Jack, then it is all downhill to Queen's Promenade. But instead, how can it be less costly to pump further uphill from the main road and install three IRBCs to treat that – plus the sewage?

There is also the consideration that regional treatment works do not provide full treatment of the sewage. This is only undertaken at Meary Veg works where the sludge has been separated at each regional works and is transported by road tanker to Meary Veg – each day. I think it is five days out of seven for Laxey. So there is always some biological matter remaining in the effluent that is discharged.

Mr Callister told a recent meeting that pumping to Meary Veg would result in only a *marginal* improvement, and they are expecting Excellent bathing water to be achieved at Laxey, with Good at Peel. But they do not factor in any testing for PCBs or pollution in bathing water tests only E.coli and faecal indicator organisms.

Additionally, why is Manx Utilities pipe for regional treatment costed at £511.63 per metre, that is £2.2 million for 4.3 k, significantly less than the pump-away at £920 per metre – £9.2 million for 10 k? That is £408.37 difference per metre. That is a question I put to Mr Callister. Manx Utilities response was, and I quote: 'We have carried out a review to optimise the pipeline route from Laxey to Onchan to place as much as practicable in fields where it is cheaper to construct. However, a significant length of pipework is required to be laid in roads, for example in Onchan, under the pump-away option – 75% of the pipeline for the pump-away option is in the road requiring additional costs for service diversion, crossings and reinstatement of roadway compared to 20% being in the road for the regional option. Recent experience of finding multiple unanticipated services and unmapped varied infrastructure when installing pipelines makes road installation far more costly.'

Are they saying the problems from the promenade works are influencing their costings? But they do not know what will be found, so it could in fact come out *lower* than costed. Much of Onchan does not date from the Victorian period like Douglas Promenade. Much of the pipeline would not be through urban areas. So how genuine is it that we have the accurate cost for the pump-away pipeline?

Moving on, the carbon and environment option comparison document provided by Manx Utilities requires that the 10 k pump-away option would cross a number of existing hedgerows and trees that are likely to require removal. But they confirmed to me that 75% would be under roads. The Compliant Treatment Plant would likely require pumping through the countryside. The document further states that reinstatement planting will be required, but the low-ground nature of the proposed pump-away option is likely to result in long-term effects on landscape, character and visual amenity. But it is mainly under roads. The underground sewage pipe would be a high density polyethylene pipeline that could last for centuries, compared with the IRBC's 20-year lifespan before possible replacement.

When it comes to Peel's regional treatment, I am amazed there has been so little concern expressed locating the treatment works within the town – if that is where the site will be. There is the added issue of leachate from the Raggatt to be dealt with, and surely that is best pumped away and treated at Meary Veg. In the interests of sea bathing and the seafood chain there is no safe level of PCBs, we are told.

I am grateful for the bathing water quality briefings that Manx Utilities put on for Members and in Garff last week. My main takeaway, however, was that both beaches would be better served by extending the sewage outfall pipes, whichever treatment system is delivered.

In 2019, the then Chair of Manx Utilities told Tynwald that the £5 million reference to outfall pipes for Peel and Laxey were if they were both needed, and that was just an indicative price. We have not costed that yet, although we do constantly survey these two outfall pipes and they are in good condition. Well, Manx Utilities now come back to me and said that a 750 m outfall at Laxey would cost £8 million but, like Peel, that is not under consideration unless *required* to comply with bathing water standards. And, considering bathing water standards, Laxey and Peel are popular

year-round bathing areas, both of which *could* aspire – and I think Laxey *does* aspire – to Blue Flag status with necessary additional facilities.

Criterion 9 of the Blue Flag states: 'No sewage or sewage-related discharge shall enter the bathing area.' But the Laxey outfall ends at the Harbour mouth, effectively emptying into the bathing area. So will this criterion ever be met without an outfall extension or the pump-away scheme?

Perhaps Members feel satisfied that all costings have been undertaken by Manx Utilities; all possible schemes properly evaluated; and there is no need for outside assessment. But I would urge that we apply the most stringent scrutiny to ensure we not only get the best sewerage system for both Peel and Laxey, but also the best price. I am left with the uncomfortable feeling that, despite going back to a blank page calling for sites and costing options for a range of systems, it feels – in the language of my former profession – that there is a great deal of spin being applied to the Manx Utilities' preferred regional sewage option.

Take, for instance, carbon cost. The Regional Sewage Scheme on that undisclosed location in Laxey or Lonan will be served by a hydroelectric turbine that will power some of the plant. Yet we know from the get-go, Meary Veg could have, *should* have been fitted with a turbine on its outfall, which estimates suggested would power the entire plant. Strange that one has never been fitted. Perhaps the Chair could tell us if one is under consideration for Meary Veg.

In summary, Mr President, there are many questions in my mind. Firstly, over the actual comparative costs between regional sewage and linking Peel and Laxey to the all-Island system. Only the scheme for Laxey requires pumping uphill as far as the main road and between Laxey and Baldrine. So, really? It is considered best to pump further uphill and build a regional treatment works instead of continuing the additional 5.6 k to Onchan. Requiring five days a week collection of sludge by tanker, instead of pumping away unseen under the road – with no discharge back into the bathing water, unlike the regional scheme.

We all wish to stop discharging raw sewage into our bathing beaches, but after so long could we get this right at the best cost? And we need to be confident that the estimated costs will not increase further.

Can the Chair guarantee he will not return for an additional vote? We do not want to see the Manx Utilities return and seek additional moneys, as was needed on Douglas Promenade and the Liverpool Ferry Terminal. Oh, if only we did have a capital projects unit to look into and scrutinise these schemes. That is where outside scrutiny now could assist the non-technical Members amongst us. How can we challenge the technical documents? Best 4 Laxey have done so and found inconsistencies that do not support Manx Utilities' view of things, but they have all been dismissed. There is no vested interest here. Laxey as a community achieved an improvement, and constructing a treatment works next to the Harbour was thrown out. Anything is an improvement on that. We all want them to get on and deliver the right scheme.

As I said in 2019, in supporting Manx Utilities moving forward, one word of caution: the sewage treatment works proposed in Laxey, done like the other areas, which are at some distance from the centres of population, are hidden from view. This would potentially be in the conservation area of old Laxey; and it is just a plea to say thank you for engaging with the community, and give an assurance that the best possible design will be pursued to get the right design, the right sewage works to meet the needs of visitors to the village as much as doing the job of stopping raw sewage being discharged into the Irish Sea.

Overall, I said then, I cannot think anybody would not want to support this improvement and, as people said, it truly enables the Isle of Man to stand tall and celebrate our Biosphere Reserve status. I stand by those comments. We must ensure we have the best scheme. Both Laxey and Peel are two of our most popular bathing resorts, and we owe it to residents and visitors to get this right. A three-month pause to ensure external evaluation cannot materially hold up the scheme, and any endorsement can surely only assist in expediting the right scheme through the planning process.

This whole debate is just about clean bathing water; getting the best scheme, the most value-for-money scheme for Laxey and Peel. But, as the Chair said, we are already Excellent status. All the tests that have been done at Laxey, as we heard in the Bathing Water Quality Briefing, Laxey is Excellent now, so why are we bothering? Laxey will be Excellent with regional treatment or pump-away, so why are we spending all this money? And why is Peel only going to achieve Good? Would it achieve Excellent if they had the benefit of the pump-away scheme?

Take it on trust, Mr Callister said, we have to trust them. We have to take them on trust because we cannot challenge and if we challenge we are dismissed and told it is technical and complicated and they have got it right. It would be easy to take it on trust and we do want this to go ahead, but surely it is our responsibility to scrutinise this £40 million spend (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) and to check that regional treatment is the best strategy going forward for these popular bathing beaches. Why can we not have what Port Erin and Port St Mary have had the benefit of for 20 years? Why are we second-rate citizens that we get regional treatment instead of pump-away? Especially if it is the difference of 5.6 k in terms of Laxey.

So I do not think we should take it on trust. I think we should be certain it is the best policy and it is the best vote. So, Mr President, I beg to move the amendment standing in my name:

To leave out all words after 'That Tynwald' and add:
'i. recognises the need to stop the discharge of untreated sewage into Manx waters;
ii. notes Manx Utilities' proposal to seek funding for regional sewage treatment in Peel and Garff;
iii. is of the opinion that the Council of Ministers should commission external expert evaluation of the costs and environmental merits of continuing with the Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy and the comparative costs and merits of pumping away to Meary Veg for both Peel and Laxey and Baldrine; and
iv. calls on the Council of Ministers by the last day of October 2022 to publish the external expert evaluation as a report to Tynwald.'

The President: I call on Mrs Sharpe.

Mrs Sharpe: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

I rise to second the amendment put forward by the Hon. Member for Garff, Mrs Caine.

I will be brief, and I am not going to reiterate the arguments already put forward so eloquently by the Hon. Member, in favour of an independent assessment of all the options which are out there, other than to say that that is the nub of the problem. Because there are various options out there.

In terms of solely Laxey, there was Plan A, to put the treatment station at Laxey Harbour, which was touted as the one-and-only and most suitable solution for Laxey; followed by Plan B to put the treatment plant between Laxey and Baldrine and pump the sewage upwards in two directions to somewhere in between the two villages and then down to the Harbour; and the option put forward by Best 4 Laxey, pump-away to Onchan or Port Jack to join IRIS. In Peel, of course, some people would also prefer a pump-away option.

Eaghtyrane, I swim in Laxey Bay in the effluent described by Dr Haywood and in doing so, I talk with a lot of people who have a vested interest in seeing the best solution for the disposal of sewage in Laxey, which I know is what we all want – MUA included, of course. And for every person who says, 'Let's get on with it and go for MUA's Plan B', there is someone who says, 'But why not, instead of having three long pipes, two going up and one going down, why not stick the three pipes together and you are almost at Port Jack?

The fact of the matter is there is so much disinformation and distrust amongst the residents of Garff as to who is putting forward the best solution, because they have not had all the solutions laid out before them, compared and contrasted in an easy-to-understand manner. Recently, Garff Commissioners approved a motion which states that they 'wish to engage the services of an

independent consultant to review the information given by DEFA, MUA and Best 4 Laxey and to draw up comparative information that a novice can understand, highlighting any area of concern or clarification. This is to then be made available to the Commissioners and the public.' That is a direct quotation.

They would not be approving such a motion if they and the people of the constituency felt confident about the way forward, and this is the body with whom MUA reckons it has had the most communication and engagement. But if we look at the MUA website we do not see a list of public engagement sessions. We do not see an easy-to-understand overview of Plan A and Plan B and the pump-way option and the options for Peel compared and contrasted equally and transparently for all to understand.

When challenged over this, MUA has stated that no one wants to read 1,000-page documents, a stance which could be seen as rather patronising. MUA, when pressed have said, 'But communication and engagement will come later after this funding has been approved by Tynwald and after the start of the planning process has commenced.' But from the public's point of view this stage, I would argue, is too late.

It is true, by the way, that the MUA did allow Best 4 Laxey's accountant to come into MUA to look at the figures, and Treasury has also allowed the accountant into Treasury to discuss figures. So both the MUA and Government have been open in this way and are to be commended; and also the Chair and Vice-Chair of MUA have been very diligent and gone out of their way to engage with Hon. Members, so there are no complaints there.

But the facts still need to be laid bare so that the public can feel confident that the most sensible solution from a financial, environmental and social point of view has been reached. Is it not better to have an independent assessment of all these options *now*, rather than letting the current discontent simmer any longer?

The planning process is always going to be difficult, but I can guarantee that it will be a lot more difficult and potentially costly if people's fears are not adequately addressed right now.

Eaghtyrane, in an attempt to smooth the way forward, I will be supporting the amendment.

Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

The President: Hon. Members, I think this is an opportune time to take a tea break. (**The Speaker:** Hear, hear.) So we will adjourn and be back here at six o'clock.

The Court adjourned at 5.31 p.m.
and resumed its sitting at 6 p.m.

Manx Utilities Authority –
Additional expenditure for Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy - Phase 2 –
Debate continued –
Motion carried

The President: Hon. Members, we will now resume. We continue with Item 8 and next up is Mr Ashford.

Mr Ashford: Thank you, Mr President.

I come to this debate with a completely open mind, to be perfectly honest. Even now, I have still not decided which way I am actually going to vote on this Item. So I have a couple of pieces to raise with the Chairman, and can I thank the Chairman for the engagement that he has had with myself over the last week.

The first one that I am going to come from – which will not come as a surprise to the Chairman – is in relation to the budget for these works, with a 72% increase in budget. I take on board what

the Vice-Chairman, the Hon. Member of Council said in his seconding remarks, but if you go through the figures that were very helpfully provided to Members in the 29th June presentation by the MUA, the additional infrastructure works and inflationary increase accounts for roughly around about £8.8 million of that increased cost, but that is actually only a 37% increase on the original budget.

I know, and I take on board what the Chairman said in his opening remarks, that you cannot compare apples and pears, and it is very different to what was originally being proposed, but I do have concerns around the fact – and it has already been quoted, I think, twice, the phrase of 'Liverpool Landing Stage' and the concerns that this could be yet another one. Because once we commit to this, we need to carry on and get it completed. I want to see what guarantees the Chairman can give me that we will not be back here in six months asking for more, saying that it has not worked or it has not turned out as we expected, and we actually need more money to complete.

I see what the Chairman is saying, Mr President, about the centralised solution and pump-away compared to the regional, but the last time – and I know the Chairman has put a figure on it today, which I think was £6 million difference, if I remember rightly as he said in his opening remarks. But as far as I am aware, the breakdown of that has not been circulated to Members. Part of me does wonder with it having been, I think it was 2007 when the policy was decided, technology has moved on quite a bit from then as have the options; and whether we do need to go back and take a look and just check that it is the right approach …

So I am looking for reassurance from the Chairman that this has been looked at in depth, that those costs are robust and are comparing like with like. Because one of the things I would be again interested in the Chairman clarifying, is that when it comes to carbon footprint calculations – which again the Chairman referred to in his opening remarks, Mr President – can I ask: the vehicles that will be removing the sludge, have their emissions been included in that carbon footprint calculation?

I think one thing that we can all absolutely agree on, regardless of what side of the argument we may be on, Mr President, is that none of us wants to see raw sewage entering the sea. I think that is just a given from the very start.

One of the things I want to ask the Chairman about is the Blue Flag criteria – and again, I would like to thank the MUA for going into quite a bit of detail around that, and some of the concerns that have been expressed to Members. But in Criterion 9, the actual phraseology of it is:

> It is recommended that there should not be any industrial, urban wastewater or sewage-related discharges into the Blue Flag area …

– and the crucial bit for me:

> … or immediate buffer zone/surrounding area.

Now, I have tried, without success actually, to find out what Blue Flag means by 'immediate buffer zone/surrounding area'. So I just want a guarantee from the Chairman that when you take that in the wider context, including the full phraseology of 'immediate buffer zone/surrounding area', there will not be an impact in relation to being able to achieve that status.

Also turning to PCBs – and again, very helpful from the MUA when they provided some commentary to Members, where they stated that studies indicate a reduction of up to 98% of PCBs may be achieved through a biological sewage treatment works, with the PCBs accumulated on to sludge particles which will be removed during normal sludge processing operations.

The key phrase there for me is the 'may be', and again I would be interested in the Chairman's views. I have done a bit of research into this and from the studies I can find, the actual reduction can range from between 84% to 98%. So the 98% is the high end, but I have found studies that are saying in some cases it is *84%*. I would be happy if the Chairman could actually prove me wrong

on that, or say that I am wrong, because there is quite a difference between it being 84% and it being 98%.

Also, in terms of the integrated rotating biological contractors (IRBCs), again, I have been looking a bit at this and I am wondering: has the continuing maintenance of them been priced into the differential of costs between whether it is a centralised solution or a regional solution? From what I can find around IRBCs they have quite a lot of advantages, but they do have some limitations as well. What I have been able to find is that once a plant is designed and installed it is very hard, for instance, to alter the operation; and also the shafts, discs and bearings can require ongoing maintenance.

Again, my understanding – and I am happy for the Chairman to say I am wrong on this, or correct me – is that when using IRBCs for a plant to be effective, and to treat waste water to an acceptable level, it requires two or three trains of IRBCs with at least three stages in each train, and this in turn actually increases the maintenance requirement and costs. So while IRBCs carry advantages, such as ease of operation and low energy use, can I ask what ongoing maintenance costs have been assessed and priced in for the system that is being proposed?

I have come to this with a completely open mind, Mr President. I have not decided what way I am going to vote and I look forward to the other contributions to the debate to make my mind up.

The President: I call on Ms Faragher.

Ms Faragher: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

I rise to support Mrs Caine's amendment to facilitate further scrutiny on this and I also want to thank her actually for that informative and frank speech on this matter.

I do take into account all the commentary around the urgency of these projects, and I do feel acutely conscious that asking this to be put back while scrutiny is applied will feel frustrating for people involved. However, I also do want to highlight that there does seem to be this breach in opinion between MUA and community groups on the projects. I have read a lot about this from both parties and I appreciate the Hon. Member, Mr Callister's willingness to engage, and his work on this. I believe that there is a desire to see the best solution, but given the fact that both sides have utilised the advice of experts and there has been no aligning conclusion drawn, I do feel conflicted.

As has been alluded to, we have all seen the detrimental fall-out of capital projects that perhaps should have been given more scrutiny from the outset, thereby avoiding that fallout. I do not want to leave future generations and administrations with more costly and resource-heavy mop-up jobs. I feel that questioning the unknown costs and environmental risks will be to our benefit, and I also note that the time given in the amendment does not actually delay it by too much.

Eaghtyrane, for these reasons, I will be supporting Mrs Caine's amendment.

The President: I call on Mr Smith.

Mr Smith: Thank you, Mr President.

Although at the outset this may sound quite bizarre and abnormal, the matter of sewage treatment, especially within Laxey Bay, has been an ongoing discussion in my community life since 1992 from my days serving the board of Laxey Village Commissioners – some 30 years, just under half of my lifetime!

In 1991 Tynwald approved a strategy to modernise the Island's sewerage system and bring to an end the discharge of untreated sewage to sea. This became known as the IRIS Scheme or Masterplan – the Integration and Recycling of the Island's sewage. By 2005 sewage from 65% of the Island's population, mostly in the south and east of the Island, was being treated by the IRIS network at Meary Veg in Santon. In the early days of IRIS, noting the geographical location of

Laxey, the rock strata and the geographical topography of the land on the east of the Island southwards, it was always accepted that the Laxey area would be one of the *last* to be connected to the IRIS network and pump to Meary Veg. If at all.

In 2007, following a review of the IRIS scheme, Tynwald approved proposals to adopt a regional approach for the remaining locations without sewage treatment. Rather than pumping the sewage back to Meary Veg for treatment, these locations would have local sewage treatment works, with the sludge from these facilities being taken on a regular basis to Meary Veg for final treatment. The regional approach was adopted largely for financial reasons. It was estimated at that time that it would represent a saving of £25 million in capital costs. Expenditure of £39.984 million for Phase 1 of the Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy was approved by Tynwald in 2011. Phase 1 was completed in the summer of 2017, with the construction of Balladoole Sewage Treatment Works in Ramsey. It was completed under budget at approximately £28.1 million.

Both the IRIS scheme and the RSTS have already been the subject of two parliamentary inquiries. Following referrals from two Members after the October 2000 sitting of Tynwald, the Public Accounts Committee examined the development of the project up to October 2007. Its report and recommendations were debated in November 2010. In 2017 and 2018 the Environmental and Infrastructure Policy Review Committee investigated the plans for Phase 2 of the project with a focus on Peel. The recommendations from the Committee's Report were debated by Tynwald in May 2018.

The Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy recommended by Mouchel Parkman was approved by Tynwald in October 2007. In September 2008, AECOM, an engineering firm was commissioned to produce a business case for a regional sewage treatment strategy, as well as a sludge disposal strategy. The study concluded that it would cost £66.3 million in capital expenditure for regional treatment works, as well as an additional £9.45 million for enhanced facilities at Meary Veg to treat the sludge from the works.

The strategy was debated and approved by Tynwald in July 2009. The then Minister for Transport said that the regional approach represented a saving of approximately £25 million compared to the original IRIS Masterplan. The Regional Strategy was developed into costed options and presented as the Regional Sewage and Sludge Disposal Strategy 2011-2016. As already mentioned, expenditure of £39.984 million was approved by Tynwald in April 2011 for Phase 1.

Phase 2 is intended to address those areas which remain without sewage treatment – Peel, Laxey and Baldrine. As per recommendation 2 of the Public Accounts Committee, an independent review of the Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy was conducted at the end of Phase 1, albeit at a later date than the five years recommended. Overall, the review supported the continuation of a regional approach and included a number of recommendations dealing with technical aspects of the works proposed for the Peel, Laxey and Baldrine catchment areas. The Report was laid before Tynwald in May 2018 and referred to during the debate on the Environment and Infrastructure Policy Review Committee report on Phase 2 of the Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy.

In March 2019, Tynwald approved expenditure of £23.5 million, as we have heard, for Phase 2. In March 2022, the Manx Utilities Board agreed that the regional approach for both Peel and Laxey would be progressed. Over the years, Manx Utilities have engaged numerous independent consultants and interested groups at significant cost: Mouchel Parkman, Dalrymple Associates, M W Barber, AECOM, Hyder ARCADIS, Wardell Armstrong, Eric Wright Water, Burroughs Stewart Associates, Bell Burton Associates, McGehee & Co, Manx Wildlife Trust, Manx Bat Group, Manx Groups, Strata, JBA, JMH Directional Drilling Ltd, Silver Consulting, ARUP, WRAS and APM Limited, to name but a few.

Mr President, the motion before us, that Tynwald approves Manx Utilities Authority incurring additional funding in excess of that already approved by Tynwald to enable completion of the Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy, has been duly reviewed by the Treasury Board. However, it

is not the role of the Treasury Board to dictate Department or Board strategy, neither is its remit to determine Department or Board policy issues. The Treasury Board approved Department and Board spending founded upon their robust evidence-based proposals and criteria. It is the responsibility of each Department and Board to fully evaluate all financial requests prior to their submission to the Treasury Board.

Regarding the case before us, the Treasury Board were aware of additional pertinent information from a public interest group which was further placed before the Manx Utilities Authority for comment. A full and substantive explanation from the Manx Utilities Authority was received by the Treasury Board.

Mr President, I have family and friends who regularly use the bathing waters around the Island, but specifically Laxey and Garwick. So after 30 years of deliberation I really do believe it is in the national interest that this matter must now be urgently progressed. In this day and age we cannot continue to allow the continuous discharge of raw sewage into our bathing waters. We have a proposed strategy from the Manx Utilities Authority to install a system which has undergone extensive investigation and reviewed both internally and externally. The current proposal, which has been fully evaluated, is a solution which will terminate the remaining raw sewage discharge into the bathing waters of our Island.

Mr President, we have already had the involvement of at least 20 independent consultants, also two parliamentary Scrutiny Committees. I am knee-deep in … reports *(Laughter and interjections)* and paperwork. Based on the plethora of waste available, I now find it difficult to substantiate any further costs or time delays to arrive at an even more protracted external expert evaluation.

Thank you.

The Speaker: You are making up your own jokes now!

The President: I call on Mr Crookall.

Mr Crookall: Thank you, Mr President.

I will be very brief now, because I could have written that speech as well, or he could have copied mine because as we have just found out we were in the same briefing in 1992, when I was on Peel Commissioners. From there, we went on to the Regional Sewage Treatment Works, which Peel were going to be offered and then they turned down, and that was a fair comment at the time. But the argument from Mr Anderson was: 'If you don't accept this, you will go to the back of the queue.' Then, as we have just heard, we did Ramsey.

But along the way I ended up in here. I came to this Hon. Court in 2011 for £39.98 million – and I have just been reminded about the 4 – to do Phase 1. That was to do Ramsey and all the other small IRBCs, RSTWs up in the north. And here we are 30 years on, 31 years on from when I started in Peel Commissioners – half my lifetime, so I am a little bit younger than Mr Smith, but only just. *(Laughter)*

It is absolutely time we sorted this. It is not just for Peel or for Laxey, or Garwick, or Garff, it is for the Island and it is for the visitors. Everybody I speak to, and I think everybody we all speak to says we have to do this. We cannot go on for another three or four years, at least. If we do not put this through today, it will be delayed again; and the two former Members for Glenfaba and Peel were going and telling people it is starting in February. We knew it was never going to start in February, but we need to get it started now. We *need* to move this on now, for the sake of the Island and everything else that goes with it, including the visitors and the tourism industry.

Peel Town Commissioners 10 years ago, for whatever reason, and it was their right, they were just against it. They gave 5-4. But now I am told from the Chairman of the Manx Utilities that they are very supportive. I spoke to the Clerk of the Commissioners and he told me on Friday that they are very supportive. I am not sure about the Laxey side, the east side of the Island, but certainly in the west everybody is very supportive and wants to have this done.

Any delay, as I said, will take this into the next parliament, and we will not finish it in this time, I am sure of that. It needs to be done. We owe it to our residents and everybody else, and the visitors to the Island, to get this right.

I just want to mention the Blue Flag status. We would all love the Island to be Blue Flag status, but that comes with a lot of other bits and pieces and add-ons, and that includes the local authorities in that. So, yes, we could aim for that and maybe one day we will get it. But this is about just stopping … And as the people of Patrick said, 'Keep Peel poo out of Patrick, or in Peel'. But it is like, 'Let's get it done. Let's stop it going out into the bay.' We do *not* want it going out into the bay and being discharged any more, whether it be on the east coast or the west coast.

There were a few comments made along the way by one or two Members about the overspend costs, and things like that. I hate to say it, but we regularly overspend. But there is usually a good reason for it and as my colleague here has just said, this has been through the mill this time as it has been in other times. We have to trust Treasury and we have to trust those, and if it is not then the PAC will take them to account afterwards. I will not say 'lessons should be learned'! *(Laughter)*

I have mentioned the Blue Flag status. From Peel's point of view, this will be in Peel now, whereas before at Glenfaba House it was going to be just outside of Peel. The people of Patrick did not want it there, but this takes it back into Peel. Yes, it is right on the edge of Peel, but it is on an area I think that is zoned as 'light industrial'. It is zoned and it is ready to go. It is a clean site. This can be quick and it is exactly what we want. That will actually make it a good chance of being cheaper, but no more expensive, because it is a clean site to work on.

Yes, unfortunately it is a greenfield site, but that is what we have got as the preferred site from Manx Utilities.

I thank Mr Greenhill for that breakdown before from the added costs, but I understand why that is; and Dr Haywood for her comments about the 'uurghs' and that down there. I will take her word for it. I do not want to go down there and see it; we see enough of it on Peel Beach, I do not want to see any more. I will leave it there, Mr President.

The President: I call on Mr Wannenburgh.

Mr Wannenburgh: Thank you, Mr President.

Like Mr Peters, I too came into this House on the back of a promise to hold people to account. I have made my views on the mismanagement of the ferry terminal project well known. I maintain those views. But I also stood to make this Island a better place for all of her residents. This includes grasping the nettle when projects such as this need to be undertaken. The simple fact of the matter is that our Island Plan states 'building great communities' – and pumping raw sewage into our waters does not add to that. We will never have suitable bathing water as long as we continue to pump raw effluent into the marine life.

I have spoken to the Chair of the MUA and I have his assurance that this project has been financially stress tested. I will hold him to account on this, but whatever the sums involved it will be a fraction of the sums given over to climate change in the future. The people of Laxey, Baldrine and Peel have been ignored for far too long. Now is the time that we are going to build great communities and an Island that is going to be fit for a hundred thousand people by 2037.

Now is the time, we are the people, we need to get it done. (**Two Members:** Hear, hear.)

Thank you.

The President: I call on Mr Henderson.

Mr Henderson: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

I was first elected in July 1998 and not long after that I was catapulted into this place and suddenly found myself waist-deep in … (**A Member:** Poo!)

The very arguments that are raging backwards and forwards across the floor of this hon. place this afternoon were raging backwards and forwards across this hon. place in those days, pretty

much exactly the same as is being put forward now. That is 24 years ago that those arguments were still going on, although the IRIS scheme had been commenced by then. I clearly remember Peter Karran, the Hon. Member for Onchan, standing up and giving it what for about pumping excrement up hills and I can clearly remember Tony Brown, Minister for DoI, going into paroxysms of hysteria at the IRIS scheme being criticised and torn to pieces and shredded in such a horrific fashion.

And then, lo and behold, we have a reassessment, and the Hon. Member for Garff, Mr Smith, has outlined the historical background to this to an absolute tee. The amount of assessments, reassessments, environmental assessments, let's-have-a-look-at-the-whole-thing-all-over-again assessments and let's-do-something-different assessments, it has all been done, Hon. Members, at least twice, and informally and all sorts by every group imaginable you can think about. So to go down the road of having another assessment, I do not think is really viable.

For those of you who worried about being washed up on Liverpool landing stage, if you support the amendment, that is exactly where you are going to be, in my view, because I have seen the procrastination, the delays, the rows over planning, 'Not in my backyard, not there, we can't have it here, we can't have it there', 'Woah! We don't want that.' But at the end of the day, I would urge Hon. Members to think about what the Hon. Member for Rushen, Dr Haywood, said with regard to what actually is in raw effluent being pumped into the marine environment and round our beaches. I can fully corroborate what she is saying, coming from a former healthcare background. How we have not had any serious health conditions or deaths over the decades as a result of what *is* being pumped into our sea, I just do not know, Eaghtyrane. It is astonishing, actually.

Another story, Eaghtyrane, just to drive the point home a bit, in the early 1970s, two friends of mine went swimming in the Port Jack area of Douglas Bay, came home to their respective parents' houses in the evening and both were promptly dumped in a Dettol bath, because they *stunk* of effluent. They were completely contaminated with it, and that is how bad Douglas Bay was in those days. Thank goodness we have pushed on with the sewage treatment schemes. And here we are, at the final hurdle, where we can actually pronounce to the world that we have clean Island beaches.

I would say, let's be ambitious, let's go for total Blue Flag status, and what a good feather in our caps to go towards our Biosphere status. When UNESCO come back in a couple of years' time to re-evaluate how well we have been doing, would that not be something to say, 'Yes, and we've also got *this* in our caps now as well'?

So Hon. Members need to really think about the situation here. It is a fact, a common, logical fact, the longer we delay the more expensive it is going to be anyway, whether it is a pumping methodology or regional treatment plants. The regional treatment plants were assessed at the time and reassessed as being the financially viable option, measured against pumping methodologies. I am sure if you balance those pricings out from then to now, the regional option would probably still hold up being the better option.

So Hon. Members, I urge you all to think seriously about what has been proposed this afternoon. The MUA have gone through hoop after hoop after hoop to demonstrate the facts and figures for you, but do not get lost in the technical detail. That is one of my clear messages to you all this afternoon, Eaghtyrane. Keep an overview of the strategic picture. We want Blue Flag beaches all round the Isle of Man. We want to hit our UNESCO Biosphere reaffirmation target in a few years' time, and we do not want Laxey and Peel to be a sludge basin. We want them to be clean, super marine areas that everyone can swim safely in and enjoy.

Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

Two Members: Hear, hear.

The President: I call on Dr Allinson.

The Minister for the Treasury (Dr Allinson): Thank you very much, Mr President, and I would just like to thank those Hon. Members who have spoken before me, because it shows the sh … the shared experience of some Tynwald Members. *(Laughter)*

The President: That was close!

Dr Allinson: I have actually only been involved in this sort of problem for the last five years, previously as Chair of Manx Utilities and now in terms of Minister for the Treasury and having to deal with the bill for it. I would like to thank Mr Smith and Mr Greenhill for going through the extensive timelines, the facts and the latest estimates involved in this.

I think it is important that we acknowledge that those who are opposed to change will often try to plant seeds of doubt, even in the best planned scheme. So we have heard of talks about PCBs and costs and hidden agendas. I do not think there has been any capital project that has gone through as much scrutiny as the one before us today.

We have heard also that it is really important to hold people to account in terms of major infrastructure projects. I would argue that that is really very much the role of Treasury going forward, both in terms of Statutory Boards and Departments, to make sure that they deliver on time and on budget. But we have also heard that actually Manx Utilities has got a very good record of doing just that.

We have heard about the Liverpool landing stage, but we have also today heard the Chief Minister talk about a bold and ambitious Economic Strategy. The need to invest in people, the need to invest in our Island. That has to be on the foundation of facts and good governance, absolutely, but also has to be based on that ambition and moving forward, if we are going to achieve not only what we put in the Island Plan, but what we have also been talking about today in terms of climate change, in terms of the Economic Strategy, in terms of all the other things we want to push forward to deliver for the people who put us here.

What I would say is I would like to give a commitment from Treasury to actually look at the delivery of this scheme. In the past we have had a Treasury officer sitting on all Manx Utilities boards going forward, holding them to account, asking the difficult questions, making sure big capital projects are delivered. All the projects that Manx Utilities delivered are often looked at quite extensively beforehand, forward planned, they are put out for tender, they have attracted some very interesting construction firms, both from on Island and off Island to deliver these, and they have successfully done this.

So certainly, I am very much in favour of pressing ahead with this scheme. I would prefer if there were not so many zeroes on the figures, but very much in favour of pressing ahead with this scheme. I cannot support the amendment, I am afraid, from the Hon. Member for Garff, Mrs Caine, because again it takes us nowhere. It just takes us back to the same arguments that we have been having again and again, and I would like to press forward.

So with that, Mr President, all I would say is, from a Treasury perspective, this is just the start of a process of making sure that this scheme delivers what is asked for by the people of this Island, which is to stop the pumping of raw sewage into our seas.

Thank you.

The President: I call on Mrs Barber.

The Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture (Mrs Barber): Thank you, Mr President.

So I was going to start with a little story, actually, where myself and the Chair of the MUA now found ourselves back at the end of 2017, I think it was, inside some of these IRBCs, having a look at what they were like, what they did, what the smell was like, *(Interjection by Mr Callister)* standing down wind in various areas. And then also visiting Meary Veg and standing on what, if you stretched your imagination, looked a little bit like you were in *Charlie and the Chocolate*

Factory on top of the chocolate river. *(Laughter)* It was not entirely how I had envisaged being an MHK, but I was willing to go with it.

We then had *numerous* tables of finances presented to us and I was thinking, 'I'm just drowning in papers.' But it was clear there was a huge level of consideration that had been given to it. But I equally have some sympathy with the position that Mrs Caine has come to and with the amendment she has brought here today. But my overriding feeling is that we have to press on with this project. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) And actually the water safety, for me, is now my primary objective. I think that this has just gone on far too long.

I take a chance and I let my children and myself go swimming in the beaches and seas we are talking about, because they want to play. And frankly, you get to a point as a mum where you think it is probably easier than the fight of telling them that they will have to keep their clothes on and go home with just an ice cream in their hand. But I think we have a real responsibility here to get this right. We have an opportunity that I feel we have had on previous occasions and it has not managed to get across the line. But to not achieve that today I think would just be unforgivable.

So I will be supporting the proposal to fund the completion of the second phase of the Regional Sewage Treatment Strategy, providing treatment works for Peel and Garff. Currently in both the areas, as we know, raw sewage is being discharged into our coastal waters. As Dr Haywood has eloquently talked about, the deposit of those large numbers of faecal indicator organisms significantly influences bathing water quality in the area.

The Isle of Man Bathing Water Standards and Objectives Scheme 2021 is based on the 2006 EU Bathing Water Directive and was brought in to improve the quality of the environment and protect human health. Also in our time, as part of the Environment and Infrastructure Policy Review Committee, we were big advocates for the adoption of those 2006 standards and it took quite some time to get there, although we could clearly see that sticking with the 1976 standards were outdated. I was pleased at that time that the Council of Ministers did accept that that was the right thing to do and moved towards 2006. Although, as I said, it took a little longer than perhaps I would have liked.

We should be constantly striving to manage our bathing waters to the best possible standards, and that must be all of our bathing waters. Whether we achieve Blue Flag status in the future, because we need toilets and we need showers in all sorts of other infrastructure, I do not know. But actually, the core principle of having clear bathing waters for people to get in, even if they decide to keep the salt and the sand stuck on them, as much as it *really* bothers me, is their choice. Whether we can put showers and toilets everywhere, I am just not clear yet, but actually, for me, the priority has to be the clean water around our coastline.

At the moment, as much as I believe that we must have an objective of meeting the Good, if not Excellent, standards of the 2006 regulations, not just designated bathing waters, but I am sure we agree, as I said, that this must be everywhere. Until this is the case, I and Dr Haywood and the DEFA team are absolutely committed to making sure that public information is clearer in this regard. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) One of the pieces of work we are doing is about reviewing the signage in place at *all* beaches, whether designated or not designated, to ensure that people who choose to bathe can do that by making an informed decision. I think that is a really important piece of work.

So just for a little bit of information, which I did circulate to Hon. Members, to make sure it is on the record, within the current scheme, bathing waters are defined as 50 metres. The definition is specific to the Isle of Man and was introduced having been assessed by the team as being considered the reasonable limit for most bathers, where they would choose to swim and also where the greatest risk of pollution would be expected. DEFA undertake bathing water quality monitoring in exactly the same way as the UK and published the results on its webpages on the gov.im website. Upon completion of the improvement works in Peel and Garff, we will work with local authorities to designate bathing waters at these beaches, something that has been long-awaited by local authorities and local residents alike.

In Peel, there is the further complication in that the discharge includes leachate from the Raggatt landfill site, which contains low levels of PCBs. The scientific literature indicates that a sewage treatment works, as proposed at Peel, will effectively remove 85% to 98% of those PCBs. This means that the already low levels of PCBs detected in the Raggatt leachate will be further reduced to lower levels following processing in a sewage treatment works. We will, of course, continue to monitor levels to provide assurance around the quality of our Manx waters.

We also have confirmation from the UK government that the development of a sewage treatment works to manage and control emissions of PCBs present in landfill leachate to the wider marine environment is the best available technology for dealing with this problem.

I will conclude by saying that it is not an acceptable practice, from an environmental protection and health perspective, to continue with the discharge of raw sewerage into our marine environment at Peel and Garff. I therefore strongly support the motion as the construction of regional sewage treatment works is necessary to safely treat raw sewage and further reduce discharge of PCBs. And hopefully so that we can all, and our children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews and anyone else we happen to know – or our constituents, even – we can watch them playing safely in these waters without worrying about the legacy that exists currently.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: I call on the mover to respond.

Mr Callister: Thank you, Mr President.

Can I thank everybody for their contributions on an important topic, and as so many people have said, this has been discussed so many times over the last 30 years.

I apologise if I have not got hold of everybody's comments, everyone's questions, but, as I said, I have always had an open-door policy. If I have not answered your question today and you have still got concerns, regardless of what the decision is today, please send me the email and we will do our very best to answer them. But it was quite a long debate and I do not think I have ever written so much in such a short amount of time.

Can I start by thanking Mr Greenhill for seconding this financial motion here today and, as the Vice Chair of Manx Utilities, for giving us a clear breakdown of some of the additional cost attached for completing the works in Peel and for Garff.

Secondly, can I thank Mr Peters for his comments. I think we are all very concerned about increases in costs and services at the moment, not just on this project, but all projects. I think some of the additional cost, as we have said in some of the speeches, is due down to the fact that we have listened to local concerns, especially around the location of site. So basically, what is in front of Members today is not an overspend. We are basically looking at new designs, new planning applications, new sites, but his concerns are very much valid and I do thank him for that.

Can I sincerely thank Dr Haywood as well, for her comments on the bathing water quality standards for our beaches and around our Island. Can I also take this opportunity to thank Dr Haywood for attending all of the meetings locally, both in Peel and Garff, and for her input into those meetings. It was incredibly helpful. Can I also extend that thanks to the Department of DEFA and the Minister herself.

Can I also thank Mr Glover for his comment. Apologies, as I said, I was trying to write as fast as I can to get as many comments as I possibly could down. In respect of the location for Peel, the actual site is listed within the western and the northern area plan, so it is in the public domain.

There are some concerns in respect of the Garff site and we are desperately trying to secure funding to secure the land, and then that is when the process really starts, because that is when we engage with local authorities, that is when we start submitting plans and detailed planning applications. That is when the local authorities and the residents in these areas get their greatest input into this. I encourage everybody in Peel and to Garff, if they are in favour or against, make sure their voice is heard on these two important pieces of work.

You also asked the question on bathing standards. Peel will achieve Excellent for normal operation and Excellent and Good for storm flows. I would just want to clarify that.

You also mentioned about Blue Flag status and I will pick this up at another point when I give my address in a minute, because there is nothing stopping a local authority applying for Blue Flag status once it has been given designated sea water … they have got the creditation. So there is no problem on that, and I sincerely hope at some point in the future some of our local authorities do that: they take the opportunity to apply for Blue Flag status and I hope at some point we actually see that.

Can I also thank Mr Mercer from Council who asked if it is safe to swim. The answer is yes. I am more than happy to take part in the Peel Day dip with you or in the one in Laxey, if you would like to join me. I will be gladly there when the work is complete.

In the respect of Mrs Caine, I apologise, there was quite a lot of information there. So I apologise that I am not going to be able to get every single comment. But I will just pull out some bits. I think, in respect of the Member for Laxey, I think there is a bit of misquoting on the Blue Flags. Our proposals have not prevented Blue Flag status in Laxey and in Peel and we have already actually said that. I hope at some point, when we get through this and the works are completed, that the likes of Garff and Peel apply for Blue Flag status.

There are concerns about where the location is, but we have to protect the right of the landowners. As soon as we get the finances in place, as soon as we get the planning applications, we will engage fully with all elected Members on a local level, on a national level and with the local concerned groups to make sure that we are trying to get this work done and complete.

You mentioned about the works. It is worth repeating that phase 1 was delivered under budget and on time. Nobody can foresee the cost increases to Brexit, the Ukraine War or COVID. It is worth mentioning that Manx Utilities does have a record of actually implementing sewerage schemes on time and on budget. It is worth also mentioning that the pump-away option to Meary Veg will require significant upheaval along the route. It is not as simple as people say.

I know you have also mentioned about experts, and I think Ms Faragher actually talked about experts. Unfortunately, Manx Utilities have no details on who those experts are. We know we have allowed an accountant to look at the financial information on behalf of Best for Laxey, but he is not an engineer. So I just wanted to clarify that point.

I also want to thank Mrs Sharpe. To answer your questions, we have had eight group sessions with Best for Laxey and we have had various meetings with local authorities and local MHKs, and that will continue. Regardless of what happens today, we will continue that engagement until we complete these works.

In respect of the previous Treasury Minister, Mr Ashford, I thank him for his comment. I will just pull up one part, because there was so much stuff coming through. The first one you asked, you talked about the list of costs in relation to maintenance. I can tell you that they relate to the capital maintenance, power cost, telephone cost, pump station labour cost, engineering maintenance cost, sludge disposal cost, tankerage, annual UV cost, pump station power cost, just to name a few. And also the vehicle maintenance and replacement.

To answer some of your other questions, as I have just said, we have a history of delivering projects, at Manx Utilities, on time and on budget, and if we can find savings within this scheme, we will find them. I think my colleague from Council, Mr Greenhill, has already outlined some of those savings: potential transfer to one Department; selling of assets. We will do everything we possibly can. But some of these costs relate to the fact that we have listened to local concerns and, as I have said, this is a new site, a new application, a new idea, which actually I think is supported by the communities.

You also asked about emissions. I can confirm that vehicle emissions are included in the carbon calculations.

You also asked about PCBs. The outflow levels will still be detectable levels, even at … *(Interjection)* Did you say undetected? (**Dr Haywood:** Undetectable.) Undetectable! Thank you,

Dr Haywood. Undetectable levels, even at 85% removals, and I thank Dr Haywood again, but I could not read her writing. *(Laughter)* But I apologise for that.

Ms Faragher, I have already asked about that. You have asked about there were no details on their experts, which I have already highlighted. So again, that expert that looked at our costings is not an engineer. He was an accountant, to the best of our knowledge, but we have no details on that.

Mr Smith, I thank you for your comment.

Mr Crookall, I think out of all of us in this room you are probably more experienced than anybody in this particular role, as the Chairman of the Isle of Man Water and Sewerage Authority back in 2011, when we made the provision for the regional strategy, which was completed between 2011 and seven and then you had time on Manx Utilities as the Vice Chair. So I do thank you for your contributions.

I also want to take the opportunity to thank Peel Commissioners for their total engagement. They are fully behind this scheme and we will do everything we can to bring this in as fast as we can for the people of Peel. We will also work tirelessly with the people of Garff and full engagement to get this done for the people of Laxey as well. Again as I have said just previously, the Blue Flag status, I would absolutely love to see some of our local authorities apply for Blue Flag status when they can.

I also want to thank Mr Wannenburgh, Mr Henderson and Dr Allinson, for their kind comments. And yes, you are absolutely right, Mr Wannenburgh, I will be held account to this and I will be holding the officers to account to get this delivered for the people, on time and on budget.

With regard to Mrs Barber, I thank her, as Minister for DEFA, for her kind comments. I think I do recall that visit to Meary Veg, I have not eaten an Aero since! *(Laughter)* But I think, if nothing else, your comments actually open up the fact that maybe Manx Utilities should be inviting new Members and Tynwald Members to come and look at some of these facilities. (**The Speaker and Mrs Barber:** Hear, hear.) Absolutely look at what it takes to put this through, how you actually deal with drinking water, how you treat sewage and everything else. So I will be sending out invitations as fast as I can to invite Members to come and look at these facilities, because sometimes you need to actually be on site and actually look at the workings of them.

With that, Mr President, I thank everybody for their comment and I move the motion standing in my name.

The President: Now, Hon. Members, we come to voting on this Item, Item 8. The motion is set out on the Order Paper and to that motion you have before you an amendment in the name of Mrs Caine.

I put first the amendment. All those in favour, please say aye; those against, please say no.

A division was called for and electronic voting resulted as follows:

In the Keys – Ayes 6, Noes 18

FOR	**AGAINST**
Mr Ashford	Dr Allinson
Mrs Caine	Mrs Barber
Mr Callister	Mr Cannan
Ms Faragher	Mrs Christian
Mr Glover	Mrs Corlett
Mr Moorhouse	Mr Crookall
	Ms Edge
	Dr Haywood
	Mr Hooper
	Mr Johnston
	Ms Lord-Brennan
	Mrs Maltby

Mr Peters
Mrs Poole-Wilson
Mr Smith
The Speaker
Mr Thomas
Mr Wannenburgh

The Speaker: Eaghtyrane, in the House of Keys, 6 votes for, 18 against.

In the Council – Ayes 1, Noes 8

FOR	**AGAINST**
Mrs Sharpe	Miss August-Hanson
	Mr Craine
	Mr Greenhill
	Mr Henderson
	Mrs Kelsey
	The Lord Bishop
	Mrs Maska
	Mr Mercer

The President: Legislative Council, 1 for, 8 against. Therefore, the amendment is lost. Having dealt with the amendment, I now –

Mr Callister: I pressed the wrong the button there! I apologise ...

Mrs Christian: Yes, I think you pressed the wrong button! *(Interjections and laughter)*

Mr Callister: I do apologise. I just had this recall of the Guernsey ... I apologise.

The Chief Minister: Knee deep!

The President: I think we can correct that!

Mrs Christian: That's terrible!

Mr Callister: Absolutely … Don't you complain because you did it yourself …! *(Laughter)* Or should I get Hansard to … *[Inaudible]* the Chief Minister? *(Interjections)*

The Speaker: Resign! *(Interjections)*

Mr Callister: It is late in the day. I am tired.

The President: Can I ask the Clerk?

The Speaker: Resign! *(Laughter)*

Mr Moorhouse: Who else wants the job?

A Member: Second that!

The President: Can I ask the Clerk, do we need to re-vote?

The Clerk: It is fine, Mr President, if you are accepting that Mr Callister intended to vote against the amendment.

Mr Callister: Definitely!

The President: We have confirmation of that, Mr Callister?

Mr Callister: Oh yes, Mr President!

The President: Thank you.

Mr Callister: It has been along day.

The President: Indeed.

Okay, having dealt with the amendment now I put the motion as it appears on the Order Paper. All those in favour, please say aye; those against, please say no. The ayes have it.

The Speaker: Divide! I just want to see what Mr Callister does next! *(Laughter)* Your move!

A division was called for and electronic voting resulted as follows:

In the Keys – Ayes 23, Noes 1

FOR	**AGAINST**
Dr Allinson	Mrs Caine
Mr Ashford	
Mrs Barber	
Mr Callister	
Mr Cannan	
Mrs Christian	
Mrs Corlett	
Mr Crookall	
Ms Edge	
Ms Faragher	
Mr Glover	
Dr Haywood	
Mr Hooper	
Mr Johnston	
Ms Lord-Brennan	
Mrs Maltby	
Mr Moorhouse	
Mr Peters	
Mrs Poole-Wilson	
Mr Smith	
The Speaker	
Mr Thomas	
Mr Wannenburgh	

The Speaker: Mr President, in the House of Keys, 23 votes for, 1 against.

In the Council – Ayes 9, Noes 0

FOR	AGAINST
Miss August-Hanson	None
Mr Craine	
Mr Greenhill	
Mr Henderson	
Mrs Kelsey	
The Lord Bishop	
Mrs Maska	
Mr Mercer	
Mrs Sharpe	

The President: Legislative Council 9 for, none against. Therefore, motion carried.

9. Pre-School Credit Scheme –
General Revenue expenditure application for £325,940 –
Motion carried
52. Financial Provisions and Currency Act 2011 –
Pre-School Credit Scheme 2022 approved

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture to move:

9. That Tynwald authorises the Treasury, to apply from General Revenue a sum not exceeding £325,940 for the 2022-23 financial year, being the additional amount required by the Department of Education, Sport and Culture in respect of forecast expenditure incurred in the provision of Pre-School Credit in excess of the Tynwald approved budget.

52. That the Pre-School Credit Scheme 2022 [SD 2022/0231] [MEMO] be approved.

The President: Now, as we move on to the next Item, I have had a request from the Minister of Education, Sport and Culture to move Items 52 and 9 together, but voted separately.

First, I need the Court's consent to take Item 52 out of sequence. Is the Court content? (**Members:** Agreed.) Having dealt with that, neither of these Items, 52 or 9, have completed the six weeks on the Register of Business. Is the Court content for them to be taken at this sitting.

Several Members: Agreed.

The Speaker: Eaghtyrane, I am just wondering if the Minister would care to explain why they have not had the six weeks on the Register –?

The President: I would be more than happy to give the Minister an opportunity to explain.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture (Ms Edge): Yes, thank you, Mr President.

There were a few extra queries from Treasury so it did get put back a week, and then it had to come to Council again. So it was just making sure it was the right scheme and supplementary vote coming forward.

The President: If the Court is content for these to be taken, (**The Speaker:** Agreed.) six weeks out of the Register of Business, can I just reconfirm? Is the Court content?

Members: Agreed.

The President: Thank you.

I call on the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture to move Item 52 and Item 9.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President and Hon. Members, for agreeing to allow me to move both of these Items together. I will start with the scheme and then move to the funding.

This scheme is made under the Financial Provisions and Currency Act 2011. Currently, payments made of pre-school credits are paid to providers under a terms and conditions agreement. Rather than relying on these, the Pre-School Credit Scheme 2022 is designed to provide for a scheme to be put in place with reference to a legal provision.

The payment of pre-school credits is currently administered under terms and conditions and this proposed measure will see the introduction of a scheme which formalises the legal basis on which to administer the issue of credits. For this reason, my Department believes that the scheme should be introduced.

The Pre-School Credit Scheme will provide for the payment of a universal credit to be used towards the cost of pre-school provision for each eligible child. An eligible child is one which is resident in the Isle of Man and has their fourth birthday in the school year to which the credit applies. These payments are reclaimed by the provider or childminder from the Department on a monthly basis. An award will be made in accordance with guidance published by the Department. If a parent disagrees with a decision made regarding an award, the scheme contains provision for a review to take place. The scheme makes provision for those situations where a parent changes provider or if there is a change in domestic circumstances.

I hope Hon. Members will today support the Department in formalising the legal basis of the current credit by approving the proposed Pre-School Credit Scheme.

I will now go on to Item 9, the additional funding required to provide an uplift to the credit itself. The aims of the Isle of Man Childcare Strategy, specifically that childcare provision is affordable for all, is linked to this proposed uplift. Since September 2012, pre-school credits have been offered to parents of each eligible child. The credit not only supports parents returning to the workplace, but also provides essential early education and socialisation, which improves educational outcomes of children.

Offering a universal credit allows eligible children access to approximately 15 to 20 hours' registered child day care per week; and affords that opportunity to all our Island children. The last time the pre-school credit was increased was in 2018. Since then, childcare costs have increased, and this is reflected in the proposed fee increases being implemented by pre-school providers.

This is an essential sector which supports the wider economy by enabling parents to return to work. Rising costs are simply in response, amongst other factors, to the recent minimum wage increase and the general rising costs of heating and electricity, amongst other things. It is the view of the Department that every child deserves an opportunity to access high-quality childcare and early education, and every parent should be afforded the choice to access childcare. I am determined to do everything possible to deliver both of those.

The current value of the universal credit is £3,420 per annum. This amount was set in 2018 and was calculated based on an average cost of childcare of £4 50 per hour, allowing eligible children access to approximately 15 to 20 hours per week pro-rata across the year prior to starting school. In 2022 the £3,420 credit covers approximately 14 hours provision per week. The current average hourly rate charged by providers is £5 34, allowing eligible children access to approximately 15 to 20 hours per week and would equate, if this is approved today, to £4,166 per annum.

In order to achieve the uplift for the pre-school credit in line with cost increases, I am seeking the approval of the Hon. Court for the supplementary vote not exceeding £325,940.

Mr President, I beg to move that Item 9 and Item 52, the Pre-School Credit Scheme 2022 and supplementary vote standing in my name, be moved.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Mrs Christian.

Mrs Christian: Thank you, Mr President.
I beg to second and I reserve my remarks.

The President: Thank you, Hon. Members.
We come to voting on these two Items. I will put first Item 52, the motion as set out on the Order Paper. All those in favour, please say aye; those against, please say no. The ayes have it. The ayes have it. Motion carried.
I now put to you Item 9, the Order as set out on the Order Paper. All those in favour, please say aye; those against, please say no. The ayes have it. The ayes have it. Motion carried.

10. Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture Plan 2022 – Plan received

The Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture to move:

That Tynwald receives the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture Department Plan for 2022. [GD 2022/0044]

The President: We now move on to Item 10, and I call on the Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture to move.

The Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture (Mrs Barber): Thank you, Mr President.
We get here eventually! After a couple of false starts with the Department Plan: first with the Register of Business and second then with me being absent. *(Interjection by the President)* But we are now six weeks in compliance and I am present!
I stand here today to move the Department's Plan, which has been developed in a collaborative manner with hon. colleagues, Mrs Christian and Dr Haywood. Dr Haywood holds responsibility for the Environment Directorate and Regulation Directorate and Mrs Christian is responsible for the Planning and Building Control Directorate. The latter team includes an interesting twist in that it does not set policy. It provides the mechanisms to deliver policy set by colleagues in the Cabinet Office.
This is a truly cross-Government area and an area of regular focus currently at the centre of a review of how we deliver built environment development more effectively, as we heard a little about earlier. This is an initiative led from the Chief Minister and being delivered in partnership between the Cabinet Office and DEFA, and I extend my thanks to the Minister for the Cabinet Office, Minister Lord-Brennan, for helping us to achieve some wider visionary work to help the two teams offer improvements to how they work and thus the service they can deliver.
Today I present the Department Plan we have created. We have developed it as a team of politicians and officers, but it is a Plan for the Island and its people, not the Department. Ultimately, at DEFA, we protect our people from the environment and our environment from the people. Our Plan holds us to account –

The Speaker: And both from the Department!

The Minister: – on what we have committed to delivering for the Island as a whole. The Plan includes Island Plan objectives that the Department are leading on, Island Plan objectives that the Department will be supporting on, objectives identified by the Department as priorities for delivery during this administration beyond those in the Island Plan, and it also includes climate

change actions, as the Department plays a significant role in contributing towards achieving net-zero, but now also acts as lead Department supporting the established board structure for the Climate Change Transformation Programme.

Our Plan sets out details of our people who are so key to its delivery and the finances for the Department. In summary, in the region of 180 team members and approximately £17 million of taxpayers' money annually are required to support and protect so many critical parts of our Island. Seventeen million pounds is a significant sum of money, but there is no point hiding from the fact that what we aim to deliver pushes the boundaries of the possible. In fact, in so many ways, DEFA pushes the boundaries, far beyond our coastline and into our significant areas of territorial waters.

Hon. Members, I do not propose to talk through all aspects of our Plan and what the Department does, as I am sure you will have read it, and I would rather listen and learn from the debate that hopefully will follow. However, I would like to highlight a few of the areas that are a priority for the Department and the work that has already commenced in this parliamentary year.

We have commissioned a paper on food security and agriculture policy to consider efficacy of our policy and that of neighbouring jurisdictions, allowing us to assure ourselves that we are setting a strategic direction fit for the future in these key areas. We have commenced work and made significant progress on a 10-year fisheries strategy, as well as proposals for long-term management plans for our fisheries.

We have tendered for a full audit of the Meat Plant, made changes to the appointment of board, chair and directors, with advertisements for non-executive directors going live today, and we are working on a strategy to secure the future of our red meat sector. We have supported Treasury to review what the future should look like for the Island's flour mill to ensure our bread sector is appropriately supported. We have recognised the need to increase milk prices via the Milk Price Order and the importance of retaining local produce. We are currently identifying ways we can use existing schemes to provide additional support directly to producers at a time when input costs are at unprecedented levels.

We have made plans to increase air quality testing across the Island to ensure we have a comprehensive data set and committed to considering how we can improve monitoring for bathing water quality alongside improving the signage on both designated and non-designated bathing water areas to ensure people are able to make informed decisions.

We have supported the built environment project and will continue to do so, recognising the project seeks to deliver outcomes aligned very much to those of the Department and the hardworking officers that sit within our Planning team. And as the Chief Minister announced in his Economic Strategy speech earlier today, we have also committed to reviewing the Offshore Energy Production Strategy, an action in response to the helpful motion from my hon. colleague in Council, Mr Mercer. There is lots going on and there is lots still to do.

With the Climate Change Plan and the additional positive demands of the Island Plan, we are also reviewing what we do and how we do it. The Department leads 11 targets under the Island Plan and supports the delivery of 13 more, as well as 27 departmental objectives. Additionally, under the original structure of the Climate Change Action Plan, the Department was committed to supporting 51 actions. The Climate Change Action Plan published today has changed since the draft actions were published within our departmental plan, and we propose to make the necessary amendments to our Department delivery plan once the Action Plan has been formally considered by this Hon. Court in October.

Having mentioned the Climate Change Plan and the very recent switch of responsibility to the Department since the production of this Plan, I hope Hon. Members can accept we are all trying to move in a fast and agile manner, which sometimes beats our process timelines. There will need to be changes and operationally my Department will focus on what we must do from a statutory perspective and review what we have historically done because it has always been done that way.

Hon. Members, this is a live Plan and with the pace of change we need to achieve to keep ahead of global change, I do expect it to evolve and adapt. With all of the targets and objectives will come measures. The Department Plan does not yet include delivery dates or KPIs for all

objectives, but if this Department Plan is approved, macro-indicators and departmental-level KPIs will be set and loaded onto our website. Where objectives change, they will be identified to ensure the document is accessible and clear to those reading it.

Hon. Members, many of our areas of work mean that whilst on one hand we please someone, we sometimes disappoint another and many areas carry high emotions due to the passions people have around them. Many of our activities need to balance views, whilst others are black-and-white regulatory controls. The Department's previous plans have achieved some really great results, but in some areas we have seen concern and conflict. We must learn from this and strive to continue to be better and more agile, whilst protecting our people from the environment and our environment from our people, in a Plan which I hope you will support on behalf of our community.

Mr President, I beg to move the motion standing in my name.

The President: Mrs Christian.

Mrs Christian: Thank you, Mr President. I beg to second and reserve my remarks.

The President: I call on Miss August-Hanson.

Miss August-Hanson: Thank you, Mr President, and to the mover.

The receipt of more Department plans is very encouraging to see. I welcome in particular the clarity and the accessibility of DEFA's. Too often exercises in the production of visionary documents tend to present as a bit text-heavy, unwieldy and not very clear for the public. This, I am very happy to say, is the opposite, and the clarity afforded in the infographics is something that others might wish to consider.

On the detail, there is an ambitious suite of objectives for delivery, and I commend that. Mr President, on the objective 'Contribute to the development of a Regulatory Authority on the Isle of Man', can I ask the Minister, please, are Hon. Members likely to hear more detail about this concept ahead of the specified delivery date of December 2022?

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: I call on Mr Ashford.

Mr Ashford: Thank you, Mr President, and can I start by thanking the Minister for bringing forward to the Hon. Court such a comprehensive Plan.

Although I may represent one of the more urban constituencies on our Island, I am one of the first to recognise that if we are to deliver on our Island Plan goal of building a secure, vibrant and sustainable future for our Island, then our Biosphere, agricultural and fishing sectors and, indeed, our entire ecosystem, needs to play a fundamental part in that. It is a good Plan, Mr President, which I will wholeheartedly be supporting. In fact, actually, there is very little in the Plan that I think anyone can really quibble over. There is a lot of ambition within the Plan, and I wish the Department well as it works towards its delivery, but that is one of the things that in the back of my mind leaves a little niggle of concern.

So the one thing I would like to ask the Minister – and she referred in her opening remarks to pushing boundaries, Mr President – is with all of the ambition and targets, is she confident that the Department can deliver on such a wide range of topics? For me, with hindsight, which of course is a wonderful thing, that I have always said allows people to look knowledgeable after the fact, looking back to the last administration, one of the problems I perceive with the Programme for Government is it tried to be too ambitious. It tried to do too much with the resources that were actually available. That meant that things were not always as focused as they could be, and there were lots of things partly delivered, rather than a few things delivered entirely and well.

When we had the Island Plan debate in this Hon. Court, that was something that came across: the need to focus on delivering a few things well, rather than a focus on trying to do 100 things partly.

By my count, on page 15 of the Plan, there is 16 of the 27 objectives due for delivery before the end of next year. So is the Minister confident that there is adequate resource to deliver what is a comprehensive list of priorities – as I am all for ambition, Mr President, and I hope the Department can deliver on them all, but sometimes it also has to be tempered with the reality of the resources available. So I just want to check that the Minister feels that it is a very ambitious plan, it is also a very deliverable plan.

The President: I call on Mr Johnston.

Mr Johnston: Thank you, Mr President.

May I thank the Minister and her team for the DEFA Department Plan, the detail of which really highlights a range of subjects covered by this Department.

If I could highlight a few things, on page 15, Planning and Building Control, an objective:

> To update and improve the planning process, with a targeted review of the Town and Country Planning Act and the Development Procedure Order

Building Control sits within this Department and recent correspondence I received from a local authority highlighted concerns on whether current legislation recognised the importance that any conditions attached to planning consent are fully communicated and checked off by both Planning and Building Control before a project commences. Perhaps the Minister can provide reassurance that her Department will work to ensure clear communication between the different aspects of planning where she has responsibility.

I have commented before on the separation of agricultural policy from food security and I note they are still in separate sections on page 11 and 12. Whilst I recognise that self-sufficiency does not guarantee food security, putting the local farming industry at the heart of food security is surely still a sound policy. This idea can only have been strengthened when you take into account the fragility of extended supply lines and uncertain world highlighted by current events in Ukraine and the continuing pressures caused by climate change.

Having a clear, well-communicated food security policy is vital for local consumers and can only be achieved if the Manx farming industry and processors have confidence in Government policy, so that they can plan for the medium to long term, including financial and succession planning. I welcome the commitment here to work with key stakeholders and I hope the Department will work with the wider industry to encourage innovation and help us produce a wider range of products on Island.

Of course a major issue, both for the import and export of agricultural goods and inputs is the cost of freight. If there is one thing that could really give the farming and food industry the shot in the arm they need to be competitive and provide longer-term confidence, it would be to recognise this challenge.

Mr President, we cannot constantly shut down this issue with the usual mutterings about trade rules that are trotted out every time this topic is raised and that nobody seems to quite know how they actually affect things. If this Government is serious about the long-term survival of the food and farming industry, an industry that has seen what is fundamentally managed decline for years, with an ever-increasing average age profile, then it must do more for our rural economy. Farmers cannot all be campsite or bed-and-breakfast providers or tree growers. The nation needs food producers, it needs rural investment and confidence if we are to attract a new generation of farmers and growers to be the custodians of our countryside and continue to work the work of generations before, basically.

Moving on from that, under the Department's legislative five-year programme, the Energy Bill: it cannot be emphasised enough, the need for continued energy security. The Island cannot afford

to have its international reputation damaged by energy insecurity. The destination of net-zero by 2050 has been set, the journey we take to get there has to be carefully planned. It must be fair, realistic and affordable.

On the draft Climate Change Action Plan, the Department's contribution to net-zero, what is clear is the need for accurate data to understand and inform future plans and policy. I must note my concern on the sheer amount of commitments within this section, although it is a common theme throughout the Plan. A lot of the work is, I appreciate, cross-departmental, where resources can be shared, and I do want to welcome the close working relationship with key stakeholders outside Government. I note, though, on page 19, under objectives, several that are under the directorate of all Departments. Surely a danger here is it becomes no Departments? So I would like to see some clearer leadership on those objectives.

Mr President, judgement can only be made on results. This Plan covers a huge range of issues – probably too many. It was said of previous Government plans that there was often too much detail, a scattergun approach, that resulted in poor outcomes. I hope this Plan does not fall into that trap, and I wish the Department well in its implementation.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: I call on Mr Henderson.

Mr Henderson: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

I noticed when the Minister made her opening speech to the debate and this departmental Plan, she listed out 10 or 11 priorities for the Department. I was saddened to note that within those 11 priorities there was not one mention of nature or natural heritage within that.

DEFA, as we all know, is the legal guardian of our environment in the Isle of Man and has legal obligations to protect our environment, and re-wild nature and so on, and enhance biodiversity. The departmental Plan, in essence, has to be supported and all the work, a huge amount that is illustrated within, we cannot not. The general statements and policy objectives are ones which anyone could subscribe to, myself included, and I do – no problem. They are overview and vision intentions in the main.

What we have here is a good example of a Government Department struggling with an overstretched and disparate set of conflicting responsibilities – as the Minister tried to outline earlier in her input – all vying for prominence and resource allocation. And in the same breath trying to lasso all those competing responsibilities and corralling them into their appropriate sections within the general national aspirations set out in the Government Plan. A feat, even with the best will in the world, is almost impossible to achieve, as I think the Minister acknowledged in her opening comment, without there being cross-departmental conflict and some responsibilities losing out on the significance and priority they should receive being pushed back and becoming, in my view, political casualties.

Very unfortunately, commitment to our Island's natural heritage seems to be one such casualty. It hardly figures throughout the pages of this document, a hugely important Island factor that DEFA are legally, morally and by signatory to various conventions obliged to support, protect and enhance. However, in my view, Manx nature is not given the priority, sense of gravitas or recognition it should for such an incredibly important aspect of our Island. The very thing that makes our Island and supports us all, a vital aspect, I would argue. If we want a successful Island, economy and social well-being in all its forms, then we have to have our ecological foundations properly in place for this to happen.

Humanity depends on nature for its very survival – although you would not think it sometimes – and the Isle of Man is no different in that regard. It may be for the success of a small Atlantic island nature is even *more* important for it to flourish.

To me, this document is all about a socio-political-economical development model geared to grow our community and agricultural industry. Our natural heritage, which DEFA should be the guardian and promoter of, seems to be more of something that should be mitigated against,

rather than enhanced and improved. I note the mitigations applied to allow these developmental elements, whilst attempting to offset some of the negative consequences to nature. To me, it looks like our natural heritage is being side-lined in favour of material aspirations. But if you do not have nature, natural heritage, you will not have a vibrant, thriving society either. It will also put our Biosphere status under threat when it is time for the UNESCO review, which is not that far off in planning terms.

Given that DEFA have the following responsibilities, legal requirements and Tynwald policy directives, which I cannot find mentioned anywhere in this document, those being, Eaghtyrane: the Manx Wildlife Act 1990; the Biodiversity Tynwald Strategy of 2015; our UNESCO Biosphere status – I think that is mentioned, but that is the only bit. We are signatories also to the following via the UK: the Ramsar Convention; CITES agreement; Bonn Convention; Bern Convention; Washington Convention; OSPAR Convention; and, indeed, DEFA's very own climate change responsibilities, which they do outline. But as far as the Manx Wildlife Act goes and the nature conservation conventions that we have signed through the UK, they are not mentioned in this Plan and yet DEFA are the legal guardians of our environment.

Then I have to say sorry, Minister, but DEFA are failing our natural heritage in this regard. Given the incredible importance of our natural environment, then it should be emblazoned throughout this document, enshrining Government's commitment to the Island's natural heritage, how we are going to conserve what we have, stop ecological loss, stop habitat loss, stop biodiversity loss and how we are going to promote and enhance our natural environment and biodiversity in clear, large, signposted actions and objectives. How are we going to enhance and put nature back?

Our natural heritage is so important that in reality we should have the nature conservation section biodiversity policy team set up as a separate entity. I hope the Minister clocked that one while she is having some jovial comments with comrades across the desk. Our natural heritage is so important that in reality we should have the nature conservation section biodiversity policy team set up as a separate entity.

Why do I say this? Because over the past 50 years I have been watching the gradual eroding of our semi-natural wildlife habitat essential to support what biodiversity we have left, and I am talking about our terrestrial habitat here. I have watched bird numbers dwindle in many species, some having become extinct already. Every Tynwald Member present has been in receipt of Manx BirdLife's endangered bird assessment, 'Birds of Conservation Concern in the Isle of Man 2021'. So it is not just me giving off, Eaghtyrane, but the evidence is there and factually collected.

I have seen the uplands drained and in the Department's knowledge, Druidale as one example – rare blanket bog with European significance all but gone now. Heather moor destroyed, heather moor planted up with alien Christmas trees in plantations, heather moorland which again is of European significance and an incredibly important wildlife biodiversity habitat, all of which are also important carbon sinks. I see the motorised vehicular destruction that is increasing in our upland and the habitat damage as a result, not to mention the damage to footpaths.

The Ramsar site behind the Curraghs Wildlife Park is no longer a Ramsar site, in my opinion, due to habitat devastation and the loss of the hen harrier overwintering site there. That truly is shocking. Has the Department been following the guidelines and principles that were laid out in an extensive survey carried out by the Donaldson Edwards Review into forestry and uplands management? It laid out a clear pathway to enhance our upland environment especially. I do not see this in the Plan.

I see what is done in the yearly environmental vandalism cycle of hedge-cutting, though, when I have been demonstrating the huge biodiverse resource our hedgerows provide, in some cases the only resource, and yet there is a DEFA hedge-cutting code that should be far better promoted. We do not need miles and miles of brown and grey dead hedgerow, devoid of life and biodiversity, cut back to the earth almost. We can do far better than that. Hedgerows are also important for climate change mitigation.

I see that DEFA intend to implement a Biodiversity Strategy by 2025. Is that the one Tynwald approved in 2015 under Minister Ronan, seven years ago? A wildlife conservation biodiversity

section of DEFA needs to be independent of the Department. We need this section of Government to be able to act independently without conflicts of interdepartmental interests and be in a position to deliver far more nature, biodiversity and Biosphere objectives.

If we are supporting this socioeconomic growth model, then it is absolutely critical that we also support our natural heritage to the same degree in parallel alongside of this. We need to support the drive for the National Nature Reserve at the Ayres. The 1990 Manx Wildlife Act needs fully overhauled and updated, probably rewritten, improving the legislation to provide real, holistic life-cycle protection for nature, and that should be a key agenda item. We need more areas designated as nature reserves, wildlife sites and ASSIs. We need DEFA, in partnership with our community, local authorities and conservation organisations to generate 'putting nature back' projects *all* over the place, enhancing biodiversity and providing climate change mitigations.

We need our agricultural industry to go green. We need to promote agroecology. We need far better engagement and partnering with the industry. If 'The Biggest Little Farm' in California can do it, Apricot Lane Farms, so can we. Relatively simple actions, Eaghtyrane, win-wins which will not cost huge sums of money, far from it, as but some examples. But the ecological deliverables, climate change deliverables and, importantly, economic and social deliverables would far outweigh any cost and place our Biosphere on a whole new socio-environmental level, a level where we should be at.

Gura mie eu.

The President: I call on Mr Glover.

Mr Glover: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

I am not going to be long because a lot of the points have already been covered. I just want to ask a little bit more about the farming schemes mentioned earlier; and the Meat Plant, I think you mentioned there was an audit there – just maybe a little bit more detail on that.

I share the concern of Mr Johnston regarding building control. I have had similar messages as well so I will just back that up. I was just wondering if the – it is an excellent report and I will be supporting it – once the KPIs are drawn up, you mentioned putting them on the website, I wonder if they could be circulated to Members as well?

Thank you.

The President: I call on Mrs Maltby.

Mrs Maltby: Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

In the interests of keeping emissions low, I will keep my own contribution to this debate this evening as short as possible. I am even going to keep what I say positive – something that does not really get a look-in in this place.

I rise to thank the Minister, her departmental Members, along with the Member of the Council, Miss August-Hanson, for putting together a departmental legislative five-year programme that includes the Animal Welfare Bill. It is very encouraging to read in the Plan how this piece of:

> … enabling legislation is aimed at keeping pace with a fast evolving landscape on animal welfare law in the UK.

This is something, as I have already indicated in this place, I fully support. There were a couple of departmental objectives that stood out to me which I feel the Department should already be recognised for for making good headway on. These are:

> For the benefit of our community and our visitors deliver the annual management plan for the public footpaths and green landscape within the remit of the Department, whilst supporting biodiversity.

And along the same lines:

> Support and enable our community and visitors to access, and maximise the benefits from the use of our lands and natural amenities to support leisure, health and wellbeing.

From the recent footpaths Committee's evidence hearings sessions I was fortunate to Chair, I do have confidence in the Department delivering on these departmental objectives, and I say it should be recognised, in my opinion, how far the Department has come on since the appointment of Minister Barber.

I was really excited to see within the Plan the following objective, as I felt this has never really had the attention it really does need to make a difference, and this was to:

> Identify the specialist roles and skills shortage within the Department and work with DfE and DESC to develop a plan as to how these skills can be developed on-island.

Working together in harmony, wouldn't that be nice for us all! There are many parts of this Plan that I was pleased to see being introduced and developed by DEFA. The Plan is well thought out and has plenty of achievable goals. It is certainly aspirational in parts too, but overall I am very happy to support the Plan before us today.

A Member: Hear, hear.

The President: I call on Mrs Caine.

Mrs Caine: Thank you, Mr President.

I would also like to welcome the Plan and thank the Minister for bringing it to give us a good understanding of the wide range of responsibilities that her Department looks after.

Just starting briefly on the legislative programme, I also welcome the fact that the Animal Welfare Bill is there at the top, but I remember that she was going to come back and also look at legislation on the wild animals side, and I wonder if she could update us as to where that is – in terms of mountain hares, particularly, we were looking at protecting.

But obviously overall I think this is a really well put together and detailed plan. I would just like to say I thank the Minister for all the engagement and putting climate change objectives at the heart of this, and obviously I wholeheartedly support the inclusion and the three pages of measures on that.

The couple of items that I wanted to mention – and it is a little bit following Hon. Member of Council, Mr Henderson – I do wonder whether the Department has the staff to manage the overall policy direction and the operational delivery on the ground, and whether that is something that is being looked at, noting particularly a long-term plan for the Wildlife Park. I wonder if that is considered something perhaps Government should not be running. If she can give us any indication where that review is going or what the terms of reference are for such a review.

I am also very keen to comment on the glens and obviously the Department's maintenance and the evidence provided by officers to our footpaths and greenways Select Committee very recently. The Department's delivery and maintenance regime, their bids for Treasury funding of a million pounds over several years to enhance glens is to be applauded.

The issue I have is: for instance, we have got a fantastic new play park just opening in Laxey Glen, which is really commendable, and I am sure will be an all-Island attraction actually to our part of the Island; and at the Dhoon Glen there have been several enhancements at the top of the glen requiring removal of a lot of trees; however, the top path of Dhoon Glen has been closed for many months – I want to say years.

I know that there has been a lot of risk over trees – wind damage, flood damage – but it is really what is the long-term plan over the glens going to be? And again, is the Department properly funded to be able to do all the maintenance it needs and, in that, include the ash dieback and the issues with trees around the Island? Is that something the Department can deliver with the current resources it has?

I also notice in the Plan there is an awful lot of focus on visitors. When you speak about visitors, do you mean our Island visitors to glens and other places or are we specifically, as it comments in here, working with Visit Isle of Man 'to support the growth of the visitor proposition and available visitor accommodation'? Is that from the agricultural sector perspective, I am imagining?

But we are all visitors to different parts of the Island and a lot of what the Department needs to do is because it is the right thing to do for our environment, for our future, for the benefit of the Island generally, and I think in terms of the environment in the creation of ASSIs and in the development of protection.

The Minister mentioned about the conflicting needs of different groups and offending one group and another. With recent questions I asked about off-Island use of greenways, trail bikes, walkers, cyclists, the message came out very firmly that it is a policy the Department is pursuing to enable that open access to our estate; and I wondered if there was any conflict with the wider ambition to protect the natural beauty of our Island and whether she could tell us where the Department is heading on that, because obviously that has implications for visitors and for local residents. And whether there could be more accommodation of specific trails for trail bikers as a hobby rather than the concentration perhaps that we have seen in the remaining trails and greenways that are open.

I think that the final point I wanted to raise was over the air quality monitoring, which I think is a great initiative and I think it is due to be reporting very soon. Can the Minister outline where she sees that heading, the benefits, the enhancement of that and where people can look up the results?

But overall I am very pleased with this Department Plan. I look forward to seeing further detail and the KPIs, but I do wonder if it is deliverable with the Department with its current resources.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: I call on the Minister to respond.

The Minister: Thank you very much, Mr President.

I will just work through.

Miss August-Hanson, in terms of the regulatory functions you talked about there, we have put a paper together which has been submitted to Cabinet Office. There is a lot of regulatory function that sits within DEFA, and I know that has been a topic of conversation. From our perspective, we will be part of that process throughout, making sure that delivery is possible within those regulatory functions, making sure that the resource is right and assessing for areas of conflict, so that is an ongoing piece of work that we will be certainly engaged in.

There are some pieces, I think, within DEFA that are more obviously independent in terms of their regulatory function and there are some pieces that are inextricably linked; and we have also got officers where they are doing some policy work and some regulatory work, which sits uncomfortably and I have talked about in a former life in this Hon. Court, but it is certainly a piece of work that we need to resolve, and we need to make sure that we are delivering absolutely the best we can for this Island.

Mr Ashford, yes, lots of ambition, but we are already seeing green bars ticking up on our delivery plan and, equally, some blue bars with things we have already completed. So we are certainly not resting on our laurels, because we just do not have time to. But we are reporting regularly in the Department. I think it is fair to say that delivery will challenge us, but I am comfortable that I have got an excellent team within DEFA in all the various Departments – small but perfectly formed – and huge amounts of work going on. We are carrying some vacancies and that does make life a little bit harder, but that is the same as everyone else and it is absolutely right that we push ourselves to make sure we are delivering absolutely the best that we can for our Island. So I am comfortable that we will certainly deliver the vast majority of things, if not all of them and maybe some bonus ones. So I am going to go confident today!

Mr Johnston, you talked again about that scope of subjects covered, and there is no question that DEFA has this extraordinary scope, and yet in so many ways it just sort of slides under the political radar, just mooching along doing all sorts of stuff in every facet of your life, but you do not always know we are there. But in a slightly less creepy way than I may have just said it! *(Laughter)*

You talked about planning and getting the comms right, and I think that is the same for lots of things across Government. We have had a team who, for many years, have been talking about things they wanted to see happening in Planning and Building Control, and actually the opportunity through the Built Environment Reform project has come to bring that stuff together, that they have been saying, 'Actually, if we did this, this might really help,' with some of the other thinking that has come from other Departments and to recognise that actually for a lot of it we are all on the same page and we have got something now that there is a commitment behind cross-departmentally that we can make sure we are working towards to deliver, and I think that is really exciting.

You talked about farming at the heart of food security, and I know that we have had a few email exchanges about this and discussions previously, and I absolutely agree. There is no question that there are inextricable links with farming and food security, but there are also areas of agriculture that are separate from food security, and I think it is just an acknowledgement of that. Saying that, we have combined in terms of the current review that we have gone out for tender on and that is in regard to agriculture and food security, so in terms of exploring the efficacy of our policies and efficacy of policies elsewhere, so that we can make sure that the foundation for our future strategy is where it needs to be. So we have put those together for that. We may yet bow to your pressure and put them together, I do not know; I am making no promises today. But certainly, absolutely, there are huge links in there.

You talked about innovation in farming and we have got the knowledge exchange framework, which I think is a really exciting piece. I have been out and talked to a number of farmers, both at events and going out to their farms, and there is a huge amount of innovation and ideas and people really recognising the challenge that the situation has brought and trying something new and actually the opportunity to share that information, I think is really exciting. So I am delighted to see that happening and that happens through the farming and wildlife walks as well. There are just a number of things where that sharing of information, I think, is a real opportunity.

You also talked about the challenge of freight. That has been raised a number of times at the silver group we have. It is certainly a challenge that I can see is having an impact, both in terms of bringing in the input goods, but also exporting the end product. There is no question that causes a significant challenge and we have been working with DfE to actually explore how we can support that better. So that is a known piece of work and something we are really working on at the minute. Something I have been really keen to do is to spend time talking with stakeholders, and I know that is something that happens within the Department but that is something I want to do. I want to listen to what people are saying on the ground, go out, spend time with them and understand how the pressures are affecting them specifically, because I think it gives you a far better insight into how you are creating your policy and making sure that those schemes that are being established are actually delivering what is needed at the end. So that is something I will continue to do.

You talked about succession planning in farming. It is the same in fisheries. It is the same in a number of industries, but certainly those two are areas we have put a real focus on to make sure that we are really looking at how we can support people into industries that are challenging to come into – especially when trying to get hold of land, for example, unless you are inheriting it, is a particular challenge and also getting hold of some of the machinery and so on. So there are pieces of work. We are looking at how we can potentially support people into those industries, and that will be an ongoing process. That is not something that is new but there is work certainly ongoing.

You talked about the importance of accurate data around climate. That is the same for everything, I think. The importance of having accurate data just cannot be overstated. It is interesting that one of the big actions we have as well within the climate plan is getting that data for farming, for example, and that is something that we are really keen to get; because if we can get a base-line on the data for farming, we can also evidence the fact that farmers do not need to be constantly hit with a big climate change stick because actually they present a huge opportunity in terms of carbon sequestration. They do a huge amount in terms of flood risk management on this Island and actually we should really celebrate the work that our farmers do (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) and I think that is a really important message that needs to be got out.

I think it is fair to say, going back to your first point, the scope of the Department, with the scope of the Department as it is, I think it is inevitable there will be a lot of actions. The reality is we cannot just think, 'Well, we are just not going to bother with that bit this year because, do you know, we can't fit it in!' So it covers a lot of areas but there is a lot of different teams within DEFA, so when you break it down into the teams I think it is achievable and I think that there is some really brilliant work already happening.

Mr Henderson, thank you for your really positive contribution. I do have a real confession actually: I cut out a big chunk of the speech to make it shorter and it was the bit, I was like, 'Yes, I've got biodiversity in so that'll keep Bill happy!' and it has gone. I apologise because Biosphere, nature and biodiversity were part of the speech, but I thought this morning it was a bit long so I tried to go for brevity. I failed in every angle it seems.

I met with the Biosphere stakeholder group actually – just last week we had the meeting – and one of the acknowledgements was around the need to consider our Biosphere objectives in all policy and legislation across Government; and I think that is a really important thing. That is not just something we want to do, it is also something then that will work towards our Biosphere reaccreditation and for me that is something that sits a little bit similar to, 'Have you considered GDPR or equality compliance?' and I think that is something actually we can bring into our framework of thinking around all of our policy relatively easily. But it will force that thinking and I think that is something we can really usefully do.

You talked about DEFA had lost sight of nature. I am going to push back and say that is not a DEFA that I recognise. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) We have an AES scheme that we have initiated across all of our farming community where Manx Wildlife Trust are our delivery partners, they are our critical friends on that, where all of those policies that are accepted as part of the Agri-Environment Scheme have to deliver tangible benefits to biodiversity in our nature and our environment. There was some initial concern about that, but actually that has led to huge amounts of tree planting, dubs being constructed, loads of bringing our farmland in some areas, and the peripheral areas to it, back to wildlife really successfully.

I think we have got quotas with our fishing that I get weekly reports on and that Dr Haywood has spent a huge amount of time working with. That is why we need the long-term management plans. That is why we work with scientists to make sure that we are protecting the nature on our Island. The water standards fit within making sure our nature is right. We want to make sure that we are monitoring, making sure that we are providing an environment not just fit for human beings but fit for everyone and everything. The same with our air quality standards.

We have ASSIs and marine nature reserves – two key tenets of our Department where we are protecting land that we have and a biodiversity team who took me on a beautiful walk up to see some orchids and I nearly lost my leg in the name of nature, Mr Henderson. I look at the work our officers are doing and the passion that they have for our nature and our biodiversity, I just do not believe that what you say, if I am honest, I am going to push back, is what is happening in reality. I would love you to come down and speak to those officers and spend some time with them. They will take you to the same field they took me and hopefully you will not befall the same fate!

But we are in an island that is thriving in so many areas and I am not pretending it is perfect, and I am not pretending there is not more we can do, but I am saying that a lot of brilliant work is happening, and I think that is to be celebrated.

You talked about why various strategies, legislation and conventions were not listed, but we would have had a hundred-page document. The amount that we comply with under DEFA is extensive and for me that was not what the Department Plan was about. That stuff should be our business as usual. That is the stuff we should be always thinking about, and we should make sure that our strategy and our policy absolutely sings to that stuff, but I do not know that there is a value in just listing it all. Maybe I am wrong.

I think, in terms of the biodiversity action plans, they are being delivered across Government by the biodiversity action group. We have input from external bodies. We have now got peat land being recognised as an ASSI habitat and being protected. I think that is a really brilliant step forward. We have got the work the Blue Carbon project are doing: going out and taking core samples and looking at how we can sequester carbon through our marine habitats and extend the areas where we are doing that. We have got new walkways up at the Ramsar site.

I think, for me, the Department Plan was not around the business as usual, and maybe that is where some of this stuff has got lost because actually this is the stuff DEFA do, this is the core of everything we are working about.

You criticised the Biodiversity Strategy being done in 2025, but with respect, the current one is 2015 to 2025, and if we do it at any other time it would look odd. So I want to make sure that when we get to the end of that, we have got a new one established and ready to go. I do not want there to be a gap. I want to make sure we are getting this right and biodiversity is a fundamental part of what DEFA do. So I take your points. I have probably been overly critical, because I think we are on the same page, we are just reading a different book at the minute maybe. Come down and speak to us at DEFA because genuinely I think the stuff you are worried about a lot of it is happening. I am not pretending everything is perfect because I recognise there is a lot that needs doing, but I do think we are in a better place than perhaps you have suggested. (**A Member:** Yes.)

Mrs Maltby talked about the Animal Welfare Bill. It is hugely important that we get that right and making sure that not only we embed that duty of care for kept animals, but absolutely we also cover off the ability to bring in future legislation so that we do not get ahead for 10 minutes and immediately fall behind.

Footpaths, again, I am delighted to have seen and had the opportunity to talk to the Committee. I think there is some really exciting stuff around our network of footpaths and greenways, and we are looking forward to the debate, I think, in November that is due from the Committee.

Also we have been supporting other collaborative projects already through the Department, looking at how we can increase accessibility to our glens and plantations for those who have got reduced mobility or who have additional needs – whether that be vision or whether that be auditory impairments – just to make sure that wherever we can we are making sure that people can enjoy those green spaces, because that is absolutely what they are there for. They should be there for everyone.

As you recognise, there is a skill shortage. We know that there are certain jobs within our Department where there are challenges and I think that is something actually where all Departments can recognise similar problems, and it is important that we are all working on those working with DfE and working with Education and really looking to make sure we are protecting ourselves for the future, ultimately.

Mrs Caine talked again about the Animal Welfare Bill and then talked about when the Wildlife Act is coming. That is our next piece of the jigsaw. We have not put it in the legislative programme, although it is in our back-up legislative programme, but I suppose it is that 'bite off more than you can chew'. What we want to make sure is: are there some areas we might be able to deliver with policy initially? Also, obviously, we have committed to reviews around, for example, the wallaby population, making sure we have got the data to back up any change. We want to make sure, if we are going to change policy, if we are going to change legislation, we need to be absolutely confident that the decisions we are taking are the right ones, because if we get it wrong we

potentially disrupt that biodiversity that we have recognised as being so important, and that is not what any of us are here to do.

Climate objectives, I think, are at the heart of everything that I am talking about – they absolutely must be. So for us, even though we recognise that the action plan could change, we knew that as DEFA we would have a really important part to play in those and it was important to recognise there was a significant volume of work. If we had taken all of them out, you would have all been saying, 'Well, not very ambitious, is it?' and instead we have flipped the other way. A huge number of objectives, but we are absolutely committed to supporting those and they absolutely sit at the heart of, again, that priority that DEFA places on making sure we get the commitments there right.

The Wildlife Park review, we did publish the terms of reference actually when it was put on the portal, but I am happy to circulate those to Members just so they can see what that was about, and I think that may give a bit more clarity. But ultimately I think what is important is that we look at what the Wildlife Park delivers, how it is best delivering it, are we using it to the best opportunity? I think there is such a great opportunity up there around education, around awareness, that ability to go out and be amongst nature and see some of the local elements to the Ramsar site, as well as some of the other animals and also just getting kids out to play. My kids gravitate to the jumping pillow, they are not always bothered with the animals but the jumping pillow is always a winner. But I think it is important that we spend the time again looking at opportunities that exist there and making sure that that structure is the right structure for the Wildlife Park to really excel and be there for the future.

In terms of enhancing the glens, and I take the point about the Dhoon Glen, we have got restrictions budget-wise that have meant that we have had to prioritise work throughout the glens. As you say, the Laxey Glen play park that was opened and the Silverdale Glen has been a partnership project as well, getting the Victorian carousel up and running – all things that get people out into our environment and they might go along first of all to go for the Victorian carousel, but then you spend time outdoors, you spend time with nature, the kids go exploring, wear off a bit of energy. That is what it should be about: it is getting people out and really enjoying what we have to offer as an Island. But I apologise, the top path of Dhoon Glen has not yet got to the top of the list, but it is on the list.

Ash dieback and Dutch elm disease and various other tree diseases are absolutely a major challenge for the Department. I am not going to pretend that is not the case, and we have had to make some difficult decisions about where we can and we cannot support people in terms of going down to actually take trees down that are diseased. The reality is we simply cannot within our budget cut down every tree that needs or will need to be cut down. So we will need support. We are working with DoI on that to make sure we are focusing around safety, predominantly.

Then you asked about visitors to glens, and I would say that it is a mixture. The majority I think is local. There are certainly some eco-tourism opportunities and some already there, and also staycations. I think we have got such great opportunities for staying in our own glens and plantations, and some of these beautiful cabins and wigwams and all sorts of other things that have popped up, so it is looking at how DEFA can support that.

I think there are absolutely huge opportunities in terms of our green spaces and, as we touched on in an earlier debate, obviously also then looking at the sustainable living, and that also is an action within our plan to come back and to look at how we can support that. That was a commitment that I made previously, and it is something I absolutely remain committed to us doing.

It is a balancing act, I think that is fair to say. You talked about greenways and I think they are a great example of a balancing act. There is no question that there are people who want to go out and they want to use their motorbikes and do off-roading, but there are also these hugely important nesting birds, and it is absolutely the role of DEFA to make sure we are protecting them. So it is looking at how we can provide spaces so that people can still continue to do the things

they love, but to do that in a way that does not damage or disrupt our wildlife, our biodiversity, those things that if we lose them they will not come back.

I think that that is a challenge that we all have to take on actually, because sometimes working with those people who have a passion for one half of the argument, it is about bringing people together and understanding the competing priorities and finding solutions. That is what we all are here to do. It is not easy, but absolutely as DEFA we are committed to doing it. In terms of the greenways, we are committed to working with DoI. They obviously have responsibility for greenways, but we recognise that there is a huge value in terms of the land that sits within the greenways in terms of our nature and our wildlife.

The air quality project is another piece of work where we are really keen to significantly extend our air quality monitoring. We want to make sure that we are covering a number of areas around the Island – it has tended to be quite Douglas-centric – make sure that information is published and is regularly monitored so that we can make informed decisions. I think that is one of the key things. For me, data, if we have it, should be published. It is certainly the principle we are working to. I do not have any plans to change.

So hopefully that answers the various points that have been raised today. Thank you, everyone for contributing to the debate and I hope he might vote and support the DEFA plan.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Hon. Members, this comes to voting on this Item, Item 10, the motion as set out on the Order Paper. All those in favour, please say aye; those against, please say no. The ayes have it. The ayes have it. Motion carried.

11. Anti-Bribery and Corruption Strategy 2022-2027 – Report received

The Chief Minister to move:

That Tynwald receives the Isle of Man's Anti-Bribery and Corruption Strategy 2022-2027 [GD 2022/0055] noting the Strategy's Mission Statement, Vision, Strategic Objectives and Actions.

The President: We move on to Item 11, and I call on the Chief Minister to move.

The Chief Minister (Mr Cannan): Mr President, in bringing the Anti-Bribery and Corruption Strategy to this Hon. Court today, Government is outlining a clear framework for the Isle of Man's response to threats posed by bribery and corruption in order to support the Island's commitment to achieving and maintaining global standards, enhance our reputation as an internationally responsible jurisdiction, and drive awareness and best practice. We already have a multi-agency response to tackle bribery and corruption. This Strategy co-ordinates the work of the respective agencies, provides guidance and an action plan for a co-ordinated response to prevent, identify and respond to such activity.

Mr President, of note is that the approach is not only outward-facing. The driver behind the vision set out in the Strategy is for the Isle of Man as a jurisdiction that protects our people, our Government, our public administration, businesses, community and the economy from the risks and the potential impact of bribery and corruption at home and abroad; and where every member of our community understands their role in recognising and preventing the threats and harms arising from these activities and offences. As such, it is relevant to the public sector, charities and individuals as a developed and coherent approach, which speaks to good governance and continuous improvement.

Mr President, the harm caused by bribery and corruption does not only affect vulnerable communities around the world, but presents a threat to the Isle of Man. We have seen that multilateral organisations will not hesitate to grey- or blacklist jurisdictions where they have concerns that they are failing to tackle financial crime or meet international standards. Actions like this against us would create a significant threat that none of us would wish to see. Drivers of corruption will always look for innovative ways to exploit, and we need to continue to be alert to where our weaknesses are and how we can all take steps to reduce our vulnerabilities. I am sure Hon. Members agree that we cannot afford to take this risk. We take our international responsibilities seriously and so we cannot afford to ignore this threat.

We have been proactive in committing to and developing a publicly accessible Register of Beneficial Ownership. Our aspiration is to be a leading international finance centre that continues to be attractive to businesses and investors as a responsible jurisdiction. We have heard the message from our colleagues in industry who are putting increasing emphasis on environmental, social and governance standards in all areas of business. We have accepted the obligations under a number of international treaties and conventions, including the United Nations Convention Against Corruption and the OECD's Foreign Bribery Convention, and have worked hard to build a reputation as a stable, secure and ethical Island.

We co-operate and work positively with our colleagues in other jurisdictions in the area of tax evasion and financial crime, and many of the people within our agencies are globally recognised in their field. The Anti-Bribery and Corruption Strategy is a further step in our responsible approach and reflects the continued commitment from Government to ensure that the Isle of Man is aligned with international standards. We started looking at this last year, speaking to industry, our colleagues across Government and the local authorities asking for views and feedback from the coalface as to how we can best respond. We ran a consultation on the Strategy earlier this year. We thank everyone who responded. Your comments have been taken on board and have helped to shape the Strategy into its current form. The overwhelming message that came back from these conversations is that this is an issue that resonates across all areas and sectors of society.

The Strategy reflects this. It seeks to tackle corruption through a whole-Island approach. There is a role for Government, for industry and a role for individuals.

It is important to highlight an uncomfortable paradox that, in the first instance, success may look like things are getting worse. With a potential increase in reports, criminal investigations and prosecutions, this will in fact indicate to us that people's recognition of such wrongdoing, as well as their confidence and clarity in reporting such things, are actually improving.

We already have good legislation in place, but if we identify any areas that need updating, we will do so. We will continue to monitor all supporting policies and structures that will aid in the successful delivery of the outcomes identified in the Strategy. It is no longer good enough for us to simply keep up. A top-level commitment is required, that is relevant across the Island as a whole to address and act on any vulnerabilities in this area. We want to be a leader in the field with a comprehensive approach; and a commitment to this Strategy is a commitment to that goal.

Mr President, I beg to move.

The President: I call on Ms Lord-Brennan.

The Minister for the Cabinet Office (Ms Lord-Brennan): Thank you, Mr President.

I beg to second and reserve my remarks.

The President: I call on the Loayreyder.

The Speaker: Thank you, Eaghtyrane.

I rise briefly to support the document and the work of Government in this area. Members will recall, as part of their induction programme, that a specific session was given over to reminding

Hon. Members about their obligations under law to combat bribery and corruption. Page 16 of the document points out all of the Government institutions that exist to prevent and detect bribery and corruption. However, what are noticeable by their absence, are the parliamentary avenues which apply on top of those of the private sector.

Fleeting mention is made on page 18 of the Report to Tynwald, but it really does bear pointing out that institutions such as the Tynwald Members' Standards and Interests Committee, the Tynwald Commissioner for Administration, the future Tynwald Auditor General, the Public Accounts Committee and the Scrutiny Committees are also expected, in a democracy, to play an active role in tackling corruption, asking questions that need to be asked and holding the executive to account.

Scrutiny has found its feet in Tynwald in recent years, evolving from being perceived as a platform for opposition through to scrutiny and asking difficult questions, but with a constructive mindset to assist with solving problems as opposed to a parliamentary tool to create new ones. I hope that, like the other institutions mentioned in the document, the Government will commit to ensuring our scrutiny function is protected and our Tynwald institutions are adequately funded to do the job they are expected to do by the public.

Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.

The President: I call on the Chief Minister to respond.

The Chief Minister: Thank you very much.

I thank Mr Speaker for his contribution and absolutely acknowledge the essence of what he is saying there. It is important to make sure that we act properly within our own parliamentary environment and, indeed, make sure that we have got the appropriate avenues to both uncover but also report bribery.

I think it is worth mentioning that there are mechanisms in place already for people to be able to report, and people should continue to report concerns in the usual way, whether that is a pathway set up by their organisation or profession; or the Police, to report a crime if they believe it, such as bribery; and indeed direct contact with the Financial Intelligence Unit for any suspicions; or, indeed, Crimestoppers. So these avenues are available.

We want to push ahead now and make sure that the Island is very much at the forefront in terms of Anti-Bribery and Corruption. I think this Strategy sets out how we are going to achieve that. And on the basis that Hon. Members have read the documentation before them, I beg to move.

The President: Hon. Members, I come to voting on Item 11, the motion as set on the Order Paper. All those in favour, please say aye; those against, please say no. The ayes have it. The ayes have it. The motion therefore carried.

So, Hon. Members, we arrive at the eight o'clock hour, so the Court will stand adjourned until 10.30 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The Court adjourned at 8 p.m.