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HOUSE OF KEYS
OFFICIAL REPORT

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PROCEEDINGS

DAALTYN

(HANSARD)

Douglas, Tuesday, 10th November 2026

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Present:

The Speaker (Hon. D J Ashford MBE) (Douglas North);
The Chief Minister (Hon. C C Thomas) (Douglas Central);
Mrs K A Jenkins and Hon J R Moorhouse (Arbory, Castletown and Malew);
Mr S Broad and Mr A L Cannan (Ayre and Michael);
Mr P M Shimmin (Douglas Central);
Mr A K Saunders and Ms J L Faragher (Douglas East);
Mr D V Ciappelli (Douglas North);
Hon C S B Christian and Hon S L Maltby (Douglas South);
Mr R G Henthorn and Mrs V Hewison (Garff);
Mrs K Baptist and Mr D M G Davison (Glenfaba and Peel);
Hon J P Poole-Wilson and Mr J A J Cochrane (Middle);
Mr J McGuinness and Hon R D Cowell (Ramsey);
Hon M H Crowe and Mr M I Kemp (Rushen)
with Mr J D C King, Secretary of the House.

Business transacted

Leave of absence granted....5

Questions....5

1.1. Rising fuel prices – Mitigating effects on businesses using VAT windfall....5

1.2. Potential fuel surcharge impact – Island road haulage and agricultural competitiveness 8

1.3. Projected public sector structural deficit – Options to address excluding Reserve Fund use....9

1.4. Rising fuel costs – Assisting road haulage industry through a vehicle duty reduction....14

1.5. Loganair schedule beyond 27th March 2027– Outstanding matters with Isle of Man Airport preventing publication....14

1.6. Peel breakwater toilets – Sewage discharge prevention....16

1.7. Cataract surgery waiting lists – Number of patients; waits for more than 12 months; external contractor use....17

1.8. Long-term vacant properties – Number; published information; plans to address – Resubmitted for Tynwald sitting....20

1.9. Rising heating fuel costs – Mitigating impact on households....21

1.10. Global Business Mobility and Worker Migrant routes – Suitability checks and sponsor compliance monitoring capacity of Immigration Service....23

1.11. Rising heating fuel costs – Mitigating impact on local businesses....27

Procedural – Questions extended under Standing Order 3.5.1(2)....28

The House adjourned at 11:16 a.m.....31

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House of Keys

The House met at 10 a.m.

[MR SPEAKER in the Chair]

The Speaker: Moghrey mie, good morning, Hon. Members.

Members: Moghrey mie, good morning, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: The Chaplain will lead us in prayer.

PRAYERS
The Chaplain

Leave of absence granted

The Speaker: Hon. Members, I have granted leave of absence to both Hon. Members for Onchan, Mr Callister and Dr Glover, for the duration of today's sitting. As a result, Question 8 will not now be asked today, and instead has been re-tabled for Tynwald next week.

Questions

TREASURY

1.1. Rising fuel prices –
Mitigating effects on businesses using VAT windfall

The Hon. Member for Ayre and Michael, Mr Broad, to ask the Minister for the Treasury:

What plans he has to use the windfall VAT revenue generated as a result of the increase in road fuel prices to support businesses with mitigating the effect of those increases.

The Speaker: So we turn now to the Question Paper, and the first Question is the hands of the Hon. Member for Ayre and Michael, Mr Broad.

Mr Broad: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I would like to ask the Minister for Treasury what plans he has to use the windfall VAT revenue generated as a result of the increase in road fuel prices to support businesses with mitigating the effect of those increases?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister for the Treasury to reply.

The Minister for the Treasury (Mr Crowe): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I would like to thank the Hon. Member for Ayr and Michael for his Question. I fully recognise that the increase in road fuel prices is creating additional costs for businesses across the Island, particularly for those businesses where fuel and transport represents a significant part of their operating costs. However, the suggestion that there is an identifiable VAT windfall from higher fuel prices which Treasury can simply use to fund support for specific businesses is not realistic, as it does not take into account wider factors that affect VAT revenues overall.

The Island's VAT income is not based on fuel alone. VAT receipts reflect spending across the economy as a whole. While higher fuel prices may mean that more VAT is collected when somebody fills their vehicle, that does not necessarily mean that overall VAT receipts increase by the same amount. If an individual or business has to spend more on fuel, they may have less money available to spend elsewhere in the economy. That could mean less VAT being collected on other goods and services.

The Island's VAT share under the Customs Excise Agreement with the UK is already adjusted for inflation each year and rebased on a five-year basis, so we would not see the benefit – if there is an increase in VAT revenue, we would not see that benefit immediately. That would be further down the line. An adjustment to VAT would be made at the next rebasing.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary, Hon. Member for Ayre and Michael, Mr Broad.

Mr Broad: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

If the Treasury Minister is receiving additional VAT revenue, purely because the fuel prices have risen, does the Minister accept that Government should not be benefiting from the very cost increases that are hurting Manx businesses?

The Speaker: Treasury Minister to reply.

The Minister: Mr Speaker, I am saying that we cannot isolate the VAT paid on road fuel and assume that this represents an equivalent increase immediately in the Island's overall VAT revenue. The position is much more complex than that.

The Speaker: Supplementary, Mr Broad.

Mr Broad: If the Minister says that VAT is not ring-fenced, Minister, I am not asking whether VAT is ring-fenced, I am asking whether Treasury will quantify the additional revenue it has received from higher fuel prices and use an equivalent sum to provide targeted support to Manx businesses?

The Speaker: Minister.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Thank you for the question. I think the fact of the matter is that we have not received additional VAT from road fuel in the context of the overall agreement with the UK. We do have an inter-department committee, which his Department is a member of, looking at pressures on fuel and other matters, meeting twice weekly. As yet, they have not identified the need for any specific measures in this area. But as I mentioned earlier, the whole matter of VAT and whether

increase in prices leads to an increase in VAT collected by the Exchequer is a very complex arrangement.

The Speaker: Mr Broad.

Mr Broad: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Thank you, Minister, for your reply.

Would the Minister not agree with me that the UK has taken considerably more steps than the Isle of Man in relation to assistance for the road haulage industry? The reduction in the VED, for instance, to £1. Would the Minister commit to something similar to this for the road haulage industry on the Isle of Man?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you.

I appreciate your reference to the road haulage industry. Obviously, I know you are an expert in that area. The vehicle duty is, I think, one that is led by your own Department, the Department for Infrastructure. If it became necessary to provide support to any part of the Manx economy, obviously Treasury and other Government Departments would certainly consider that, but that is not considered necessary at this time.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Glenfaba and Peel, Mrs Baptist.

Mrs Baptist: Thank you.

It is really encouraging to hear that officers are meeting, I think, twice a week, you said, Minister. I would be interested to know what communication has happened with the businesses themselves. So is there any dialogue that is happening to ensure that we are listening and responding to the real needs of our businesses and employers on the Island?

The Speaker: Minister.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Member for her question.

I would imagine that discussions with businesses are happening all the time, particularly through colleagues in the Department for Enterprise, who have a very close relationship with all businesses on the Isle of Man, and that is fed into the discussions within that committee.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Douglas East, Mr Saunders.

Mr Saunders: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Would the Minister acknowledge that reducing the cost of importing and distributing goods on the Island could lower consumer prices, support businesses and drive genuine economic growth and activity across the Island, increasing our VAT receipts overall through proper growth and not through depletion.

The Speaker: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I think the equation is not perhaps as straightforward as that in terms of costs, because I know when you look at analyses of the fuel surcharges and other increasing costs which we have seen to date, they are not necessarily reflected in prices charged to consumers.

I appreciate that in the haulage industry and some of the intermediate steps in that chain, there will be pressures there. We are not immune to that and these are not uncommon in times of price volatility. I can share with all Members an analysis that Treasury officers have done of movements in fuel prices and the like over the last 15 years where – I mean, it is a cold calculation looking just at statistics but road fuel, when adjusted for inflation, was actually more expensive 15 years ago. But I do appreciate the pressures that are on businesses at this time.

1.2. Potential fuel surcharge impact –
Island road haulage and agricultural competitiveness

The Hon. Member for Ayre and Michael, Mr Broad, to ask the Minister for the Treasury:

What assessment he has made of the potential impact of fuel surcharges on the competitiveness of Island road haulage and agricultural sector business when compared with UK counterparts.

The Speaker: We turn to Question 2, but just before we do so can I remind all Hon. Members that all remarks made should be through the Chair and not directed across the Chamber at one another. So we turn to Question 2, and I again call on the Hon. Member for Ayre and Michael, Mr Broad.

Mr Broad: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

A question for the Treasury Minister again, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of fuel surcharges on the competitiveness of Island road haulage and agricultural sector business when compared with UK counterparts?

The Speaker: Minister for the Treasury to reply.

The Minister for the Treasury (Mr Crowe): I would like to thank the Hon. Member for his Question. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Treasury has been closely involved in monitoring fuel prices and surcharges levied by the Steam Packet under the Sea Services Agreement. Treasury has not been involved in detailed assessment of fuel surcharges that may be levied by local road haulage companies or other businesses here on the Isle of Man. In terms of the surcharges themselves under the Sea Services Agreement, Treasury indicated flexibility to the Steam Packet around dividend expectations which enabled the Steam Packet to hold the quarter 3 surcharge rates at the October levels, which was substantially below the levels that would have been required to offset the high cost of fuel experienced at that time.

Treasury considers that this move by the Steam Packet contributed a valuable breathing space for importing and exporting businesses on the Isle of Man at a time when surcharges were being applied in the UK and elsewhere by both road haulage businesses and ferry and other transport companies.

Treasury remains mindful of the need for the Island to maintain competitiveness, and the situation will of course be kept under review.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary, Mr Broad.

Mr Broad: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Does the Minister accept that the real disadvantage for Manx hauliers and the agricultural sector is not simply fuel surcharges, but the cost of crossing the Irish Sea? What assessments has Treasury made of the disadvantages, and what will Government do to level that playing field?

The Speaker: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker; thank you for the question.

The question generally of the costs associated with crossing the Irish Sea is a little bit outside the original Question here that I have prepared for. But, of course, Treasury and other Departments are undoubtedly aware of cost pressures and other pressures facing businesses on the Isle of Man and we keep these under constant review.

I think the road haulage industry and agricultural sectors also have direct communication with the Steam Packet and discussions around charges, and I would hope that all parties would work together at times when the difficult decisions have to be made around fuel and other costs.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Supplementary question, Mr Broad.

Mr Broad: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Minister, while we all accept that Government cannot control world fuel prices, it does have influence over the cost of our strategic ceiling. So what is Government going to do about ferry costs that are placing Manx businesses at a great competitive disadvantage?

The Speaker: Just before I call on the Minister, I will remind Hon. Members again that all remarks should be through the Chair and not directed either at Ministers or individual Members.

Minister.

The Minister: Mr Speaker, thank you, and thank you to the Member for his supplementary.

I appreciate his understanding that Treasury cannot control fuel prices in the world. I wish we could.

The matter of competitiveness and the impact of all costs facing Manx businesses is obviously one that Treasury and other Departments are very aware of. We are under constant review in terms of their competitiveness and any levers that we in the Treasury and other parts of Government could exert on such businesses.

The close dialogue between Government and business groups on the Isle of Man is essential in order to make sure that we understand pressures that exist and can act accordingly wherever possible.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

1.3. Projected public sector structural deficit – Options to address excluding Reserve Fund use

The Hon. Member for Ayre and Michael, Mr Broad, to ask the Minister for the Treasury:

What options, other than the use of the Reserve Fund, Treasury has considered to address the structural deficit of £92 million in public sector spending projected for this financial year.

The Speaker: We turn to Question 3 and I again call on the Hon. Member for Ayre and Michael, Mr Broad.

Mr Broad: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Can the Treasury Minister answer what options, other than the use of the Reserve Fund, Treasury has considered to address the structural deficit of £92 million in public sector spending projected for this financial year?

The Speaker: Treasury Minister to reply.

The Minister for the Treasury (Mr Crowe): Thank You, Mr Speaker; I would like to thank the Hon. Member for this Question.

The £92 million referred to by the Hon. Member is the forecast net withdrawal from the Reserve Fund shown in table 23 of the 2026-27 Pink Book. This is the cash expected to be required to fund planned revenue and capital expenditure which is beyond the income available in the year from taxation including VAT, Department income and other receipts. It therefore represents a forecast financing requirement rather than necessarily a measure of the structural deficit itself.

The amount ultimately withdrawn from reserves will depend on actual receipts and expenditure levels during the course of the year. If cash receipts are higher than forecast and are not offset by other expenditure, the need to withdraw from reserve funds could be reduced. To address the underlying structural deficit, Treasury considers expenditure priorities, revenue measures and efficiencies through the annual budget process and, specifically, the medium-term financial planning process.

We prepare the budget on a prudent basis, taking account of Government's forecast income and expenditure and the wider economic position. As part of that process, Treasury considers revenue and capital bids submitted by Departments and determines expenditure priorities alongside taxation, national insurance, benefits and other revenue measures. The resulting draft budget is considered and agreed collectively by the Council of Ministers before being presented to Tynwald for consideration and approval.

Each budget is considered within the Medium-Term Financial Plan, rather than in isolation. The 2026-27 Budget included a five-year financial plan, setting out the projected position for Government income, expenditure and reserves, with the objective of improving the underlying financial position and progressively reducing reliance on reserves.

So while the Reserve Fund provides flexibility to manage the position in the short term, the longer-term approach is to address the underlying structural position through wider measures contained within the Medium-Term Financial Plan. It is very much my aim for this deficit to be eliminated before the end of this administration.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary, Mr Broad.

Mr Broad: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Minister for his reply.

The Pink Book appears to be remarkably consistent in one respect; the surplus is always coming but somehow never quite arrives. In the 2022-27 book, it was projected to produce a £33 million surplus. By 2026, that has become a £27 million deficit—a swing round of some £60 million. Does the Treasury not feel embarrassed, always kicking the can down the road, how many more five-year plans must this House be shown before Treasury accepts that the continual moving the surplus five years down the road is not a sustainable financial strategy?

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Hon. Member for his supplementary.

I would take issue with the feeling that the can is consistently being kicked down the road. Obviously, the Member and myself are both new to this Chamber, but in each of the last three years the projected deficit in the Pink Book has been – well the deficit in the Pink Book has not translated into the equivalent level of deficit in the actual outturn. This is due to strong financial discipline within all Government Departments, some increased tax revenues over the course of the years, but in the last three years we have seen a collective – well, £52 million followed by £79 million – £46 million positive variance on our income over our expenditure.

So while we are still in a deficit position, it is not quite as alarming as it was originally planned to be, and all Departments collectively sticking to the Medium-Term Financial Plan and the budgetary provisions should see the need for a structural deficit to be eliminated before the end of this administration.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Douglas Central, Mr Shimmin.

Mr Shimmin: Gura mie eu, Loayreyder.

I thank the Treasury Minister for his answers. It was encouraging to hear him talk about Treasury addressing the underlying structural issues within the public spending. I would like to know what work is being done to tackle those underlying causes of rising public sector spending, perhaps looking across Government Departments at duplication and the unnecessary costs we are seeing rather than just simply asking Departments to make their own savings.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Member.

There is cross-government work – sorry, cross-department work all the time in the sense of trying to identify savings and eliminate duplication and inefficiencies. That work will continue and I think has delivered real results over the last few years, and certainly it is the aim of the Council of Ministers and the Government of the time that we double down on that and really wherever we can find efficiencies and eliminate duplication, all officers, all the Ministers and Members are committed to do that.

A Member: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Ayre and Micheal, Mr Cannan.

Mr Cannan: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Can I ask the Treasury Minister what is the current actual forecasted position for this financial year as at today?

The Speaker: Treasury Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Member.

I do not have that information to hand, but we are imminently going to be releasing the management accounts for the most recent period. I will ensure that those management accounts are circulated to all Members, certainly this week. I believe they are being finalised in the next day or so.

So I thank the Member for his question. I do not have the answer now but we will circulate that information, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Ayre and Michael, Mr Broad.

Mr Broad: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I thank the Minister for his answer, but the fundamental issue remains. We cannot continue to use the Reserve Fund and support the level of recurring public expenditure that will exceed its recurring income reserves. It can buy Government time, but it cannot solve a structural deficit.

Can the Minister, therefore, tell this House what concrete measures Treasury is prepared to take to reduce the underlying cost of government, and when he expects the recurring Government income and expenditure to be brought back into balance?

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Member for his question.

I think he has been reading my manifesto during the course of the election where I think I will I will quote myself – I do not know if that is an appropriate thing to do – that reserves are for a rainy day not for every day. There is a significant amount of work being put in by Treasury Ministers in the last number of years looking at this issue in itself and I can say today, and I will be repeating in a statement to Tynwald next week and in the Budget in February, that our plan is certainly to eliminate any structural deficit before the end of this administration.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Ramsey, Mr McGuinness.

Mr McGuinnes: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

We have heard the Minister talk today, and I think we can all agree that addressing a structural deficit ultimately requires recurring improvements in revenue or reductions in expenditure. I was wondering whether the Minister could explain exactly how the Treasury measure whether those improvements we are talking about are actually being delivered beyond the bottom line of the deficit.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Hon. Member, my neighbour, for his question.

Treasury and all Departments have essentially finance directors who are monitoring the performance of their revenue and their expenditure against budgets all the time and reporting to their Departments on a monthly basis. Treasury sees that information as well.

So I think it is fair to say that the efforts to improve income and to reduce expenditure are happening at all levels within essentially the Government's profit and loss account, and that work will continue. We have seen real benefits. I highlighted earlier the fact that we have been – the last three years at least, the deficit, while it is still a deficit, has come in at a level which is much lower than anticipated. That is due to additional revenues but also control of costs and, in some cases, more challenging areas like reduction in capital spend. But there has been an effort across Government to secure our financial position.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Glenfaba and Peel, Mrs Baptist.

Mrs Baptist: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

We were promised a smaller Government by this Council of Ministers. I would be curious as to know what that exactly means. Is it less people, less services or something else?

The Speaker: Minister.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank the Member for her question.

If I can answer that from the perspective of the Treasury, a smaller Government means more of a balance between income and expenditure and a structural surplus position rather than a deficit.

In terms of the definitions of what smaller might mean, I think I certainly take it to mean efficiency, more efficiency, lack of duplication of effort. I think in the Chief Minister's change document, which will be debated in forthcoming weeks, we will see brought perhaps more to life what the Council of Ministers are aiming to achieve through more focused delivery from all parts of Government.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Douglas Central, Mr Shimmin.

Mr Shimmin: Gura mie eu, Loayreyder.

It was pleasing to hear the Treasury Minister commit to doubling down on efficiencies throughout the course of this administration. I would like to know, with the data that Treasury already collects on efficiency and savings, do they intend to publish that information so that Members and, indeed, the public know what work is being done to address the deficit?

Gura mie eu.

The Speaker: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank the Member for his question.

The short answer to his question is, yes, we would certainly share with Members work that is being undertaken in that area. I suspect that we will probably do that as part of departmental briefings to Members in the Barool Suite in the coming months. But, yes, in short, I would be delighted to share with him and with Members the effects and results of savings and efficiencies that are identified within Departments.

The Speaker: Final supplementary, the Hon. Member for Middle, Mr Cochrane.

Mr Cochrane: Good morning, Mr Speaker, and thank you; and thank you to the Minister for his answers to the questions.

The question I would like to ask is simply whether the Minister for the Treasury can give an opinion, on the impact on the economy of cutting Government spending.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank the Member for his question.

I think it is a good question and I think it serves to illustrate the complexities of managing an economy in essentially a small island nation. Decisions are often not binary and have other impacts and efforts and we, certainly within Treasury and I am sure within all Departments, are mindful of the decisions that we make on spending and where they may impact other aspects of the Isle of Man, perhaps inadvertently. We will certainly avoid making decisions which, while maybe have a discrete positive impact, have a wider dexterous effect.

Thank you.

INFRASTRUCTURE

1.4. Rising fuel costs –
Assisting road haulage industry through a vehicle duty reduction

The Hon. Member for Glenfaba and Peel, Mrs Baptist, to ask the Minister for Infrastructure:

What plans he has to assist the road haulage industry with the impact of rising fuel costs through a reduction in vehicle duty.

The Speaker: We turn to Question 4. I call on the Hon. Member for Glenfaba and Peel, Mrs Baptist.

Mrs Baptist: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I would like to know what plans the Minister for Infrastructure has to assist the road haulage industry with the impact of rising fuel costs through a reduction in vehicle duty?

The Speaker: Minister for Infrastructure to reply.

The Minister for Infrastructure (Mr Moorhouse): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you, Hon. Member for Peel and Glenfaba, for asking the Question.

The Department of Infrastructure does not have the vires to offer financial support to the road haulage industry. As a consequence, the Department has no plans to introduce a reduction in vehicle duty for the road haulage industry.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Glenfaba and, Mrs Baptist.

Mrs Baptist: Would other levers that are within the control of the DoI, such as annual vehicle testing fees, be considered to help this sector?

The Speaker: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you, Hon. Member, for the question.

In terms of the Department, we continue looking at the challenges at the pricing system and looking at how things can be improved. So this is an ongoing process and whilst I cannot make promises in terms of outcomes, it is something that is being considered and thought about on a regular basis.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

1.5. Loganair schedule beyond 27th March 2027–
Outstanding matters with Isle of Man Airport preventing publication

The Hon. Member for Middle, Mr Cochrane, to ask the Minister for Infrastructure:

Whether there are any matters outstanding between Isle of Man Airport and Loganair that are preventing the airline from publishing its schedule beyond 27th March 2027; and, if so, what these are and when he expects them to be resolved.

The Speaker: We turn to Question 5. I call on the Hon. Member for Middle, Mr Cochrane.

Mr Cochrane: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I would like to ask the Minister for Infrastructure whether there are any matters outstanding between Isle of Man Airport and Loganair that are preventing the airline from publishing its schedule beyond 27th March 2027; and, if so, what these are and when he expects them to be resolved?

The Speaker: The Minister for Infrastructure to reply.

The Minister for Infrastructure (Mr Moorhouse): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you, Hon. Member for Middle, for asking the Question.

I can confirm that there are no outstanding matters between Isle of Man Airport and Loganair which are preventing the airline from publishing its schedule for 27th March 2027.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary, Mr Cochrane.

Mr Cochrane: I would like to ask the Minister of Infrastructure whether he was able to speak to Loganair or, if not, whether he would or not? If he could confirm that.

The Speaker: Minister.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you, Hon. Member, for that question.

Unfortunately, in this case I have not been able to speak to the key people at Loganair about this specifically, but it is really outside the remit of what the Department is doing in terms of what the Hon. Member is looking for in the publication of this documentation.

We are eager to see it, it will allow us to plan more effectively and it is something I have spoken to other Ministers about, so hopefully the information will be coming through in the very near future.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Glenfaba and Peel, Mrs Baptist.

Mrs Baptist: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I appreciate this question is about Loganair, but sticking to the topic of connectivity, I noticed that the Steam Packet has a similar booking window, it only goes up to May. It has been promised, both in this Chamber and publicly, by the Steam Packet that customers will be able to book up to 18 months in advance. I am just curious to why that is no longer the case.

The Speaker: The question is directly on Isle of Man Airport and Loganair and connectivity but, Minister, I leave it to you.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you, Hon. Member, for raising this concern.

I am sure that the Steam Packet will respond accordingly. I will also try and push this, so we will hopefully get something for you in the near future. Thank you for raising that concern.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Douglas East, Mr Saunders.

Mr Saunders: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Can the Minister reassure travellers and businesses looking to book for the future that there will be no risk to any routes after March 27th?

The Speaker: Minister, to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you, Hon. Member, for that very interesting but equally challenging question.

Everyone at the airport, everyone in DoI is eager to see more routes, more opportunities and as a consequence that is where we focus in our work. Inevitably there will be challenges but we will meet them and we will try and find any solutions to any challenges that do present themselves. I hope that will provide some reassurance.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Douglas Central, Mr Shimmin.

Mr Shimmin: Gura mie eu, Loayreyder.

I appreciate the Minister said he has not spoken to Loganair yet. When he does speak to Loganair, would he commit to contacting Members to let them know a target date for when the timetable will be published?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you, Hon. Member for that question.

Whether it is involving conversations between myself and Loganair or officers, we will get that information to you as soon as is practically possible. Because I am aware of constituents who have got concerns, business people have got concerns, a lot of residents have got concerns. We are working to move this forward, so hopefully there will be positive news in the near future.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

1.6. Peel breakwater toilets – Sewage discharge prevention

The Hon. Member for Glenfaba and Peel, Mrs Baptist, to ask the Minister for Infrastructure:

What plans he has to prevent the discharge of sewage from the Peel breakwater toilets.

The Speaker: We turn to Question 6. I call on the Hon. Member for Glenfaba and Peel, Mrs Baptist.

Mrs Baptist: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I would like to know what plans the Minister for Infrastructure has to prevent the discharge of sewage from the Peel breakwater toilets?

The Speaker: Minister for Infrastructure to reply.

The Minister for Infrastructure (Mr Moorhouse): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you, Hon. Member for Glenfaba and Peel for asking this Question.

Action is already taking place. Work commenced earlier this year to end the direct discharge of untreated sewage from the Peel breakwater toilets into sea. The project will install a sewage treatment system which will treat foul and grey water coming from the toilet block and kiosk.

The scheme is expected to be completed by February 2027. There have been delays due to the long delivery time for treatment equipment and when the work is completed and the DEFA discharge licence received, the discharge of untreated sewage to the sea will end. I think you will agree that that is good news and we are looking forward to that day.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

1.7. Cataract surgery waiting lists –
Number of patients; waits for more than 12 months; external contractor use

The Hon. Member for Douglas East, Ms Faragher, to ask the Minister for Health and Social Care:

How many patients, who have had an initial consultation or assessment, are awaiting cataract surgery and how many of those have been waiting for more than 12 months; what consideration has been given to engaging external contractors, and if such a proposal was rejected, why.

The Speaker: We turn to Question 7. I call on the Hon. Member for Douglas East, Ms Faragher.

Ms Faragher: Gura mie eu, Loayreyder.

I would like to ask the Minister for Health and Social Care, how many patients, who have had an initial consultation or assessment, are awaiting cataract surgery and how many of those have been waiting for more than 12 months; what consideration has been given to engaging external contractors, and, if such a proposal was rejected, why?

The Speaker: I call on the Minister for Health and Social Care to reply.

The Minister for Health and Social Care (Ms Christian): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Hon. Member for her very prescient and important Question.

There has been some considerable work undertaken to address the cataract waiting lists and I would like to update the Hon. Members on the progress made, the current position and the further action Manx Care is taking to increase capacity and reduce the waiting lists.

Manx Care has previously used external contractors to provide extra capacity for cataract surgery. However, the focus now is on strengthening the service for the longer term through increased in-house capacity that will allow it to meet ongoing demand, reduce the number of patients waiting for surgery and ensure they can access treatment in a more accessible way.

A key part of this work is the active recruitment of a second consultant ophthalmologist, which will significantly strengthen the service's capacity to undertake high-volume cataract surgery. Subject to successful recruitment and the appointees' existing contractual commitments and notice period, the current expectation is that the new consultant would take up post around April 2027.

This appointment, Mr Speaker, will increase annual cataract surgical capacity to 1,332 procedures compared with an estimated annual demand of 1,000 procedures and this would put the service in a position not only to meet ongoing demand but also to begin reducing the number of patients already waiting. As of 1st November 2026, 1,469 patients who have had an

initial consultation or assessment are awaiting cataract surgery. Of these patients, 816 have been waiting more than 12 months since it was decided they would have surgery. Alongside recruitment, Manx Care is introducing new cataract referral criteria, checking and updating the waiting list to ensure it is accurate, as well as reviewing how operating lists are organised to identify opportunities to carry out more procedures.

Progress will be monitored through regular reviews of surgical activity and waiting list numbers, with particular focus on reducing the number of patients waiting more than 12 months. Manx Care's priority is clear, to reduce the number of patients currently waiting for cataract surgery, ensure that future demand can be met and prevent the waiting list building up again. While there is still work to do, the steps are now being taken to provide a clear route towards achieving that.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Douglas East, Ms Faragher.

Ms Faragher: Gura mie eu, Loayreyder. Gura mie eu, Shirveishagh, for that detailed and really interesting response.

The Minister said there that there will be this appointment of a second consultant ophthalmologist which will increase the number of operations up to 1,132 per year, I think she said, with demand sitting at around 1,000 per year. So, firstly, that is really welcome news, thank you to the Minister for that.

My question would be with 1,469 patients currently on the waiting list, approximately I think she said 860 waiting more than 12 months and annual demand estimated around 1,000 procedures, by my quick maths that is only going to be around about 132 additional procedures per year, so how will we be reducing the existing backlog? Can the Minister explain how long she anticipates it will take to clear that backlog?

Gura mie eu.

The Speaker: Minister.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Hon. Member asks exactly the same questions that I ask Manx Care when I receive this information. So based on the increasing capacity through successful recruitment obviously in April 2027, and with no further capacity being introduced, we would reach a 12 month wait from the decision to operate to the patient having their cataract operation by March 2029. To reduce this further, Manx Care are scoping how they could continue to use external providers during 2027-28 until the waiting list time has reduced. They are currently looking at this, and they will provide a business case for this additional work, which will be dependent upon availability of investment.

Once the waiting lists have reduced to an acceptable level, the newly appointed ophthalmologist will have sufficient capacity to maintain that waiting list which is really important. But I do want to say, it is very interesting – obviously we had Question 3 earlier today talking about the structural deficit – it will be dependent on whether we get Treasury concurrence for a business case. It is obviously very important that Hon. Members, when they are asking us to meet our structural deficit, that when we need to reduce waiting lists at the same time these are going to be decisions that we are going to have to make as a House as to is important and what takes priority. I hope that they will support this.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Glenfaba and Peel, Mrs Baptist.

Mrs Baptist: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I have done some research, and I have learned that cataract procedures take less than 20 minutes to perform on average in the UK. Can I just ask how many cataracts are our consultants – I think we only have one at the moment – doing on average per day?

The Speaker: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I think it is about 10 to 12 per day. The reason why we are bringing in the new consultant is because they are a specialist in actually doing more cataracts per day and a quicker procedure. We have used the Royal College to look and find us a specialist in this area so that we can really give a very good indication of how we can increase our capacity which is very positive.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Douglas East, Ms Faragher.

Ms Faragher: Gura mie eu, Loayreyder.

Just picking up on the Minister's response to my earlier question, the Minister said that there is potentially a business case coming up for Treasury concurrence to reduce the waiting lists that will be put to Treasury, and I would like to endorse the Minister's comments there around support for that. We do need to get elective surgery back to a sustainable level.

What I am wondering is, will the Department include in that business case the wider health and social care costs associated with delaying cataract surgery. So that includes potential consequence of falls, the loss of independence and increased reliance on care services. So that when people are making these financial decisions, they can clearly see the cost of not doing elective surgery in a timely manner.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Absolutely, and that is critical to any business case that we are bringing through, whether that is the economic health benefit or whether that is actually a social benefit to those patients. I think the social side is something that is quite difficult to practically show accountants, a set of accountants in the Treasury, but it is really important because we are talking about quality of life and we are talking about people going out, going into the community and being able to live lives as they should do.

Absolutely, business cases should have this aspect to them, and I am determined to make sure that we understand the benefit, not just economically but also socially what this means to us as an Island.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Middle, Mrs Poole-Wilson.

Mrs Poole-Wilson: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I would like to ask the Minister whether she agrees with me that while funding is important, and she will know that there was a substantial sum of money invested to address waiting lists in the previous administration, that modern practice and monitoring of efficiency and effectiveness of delivery of our services is absolutely vital if we are to be able to have sustainable, proper services to support people within available funding envelopes?

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you.

Yes, Mr Speaker, I do obviously agree with the Hon. Member. One of the main points that I answered in my original question was about sustaining the waiting list and I think that is hugely important. We have learnt from the fact that even if you just put in extra capacity, it is about the longer-term plans. I would say that that is not just what we are doing here for cataracts. We will be looking at that across the board as well, so looking at waiting lists as a whole.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Final supplementary, the Hon. Member for Douglas East, Ms Faragher.

Ms Faragher: Gura mie eu, Loayreyder.

I wanted to represent the people who have contacted me and Members will have seen these comments on the media coverage of this question from people in our community. Some really concerning accounts actually of people becoming blind in one eye after waiting for three years on the waiting list, having to use retirement savings to pay privately, losing their ability to work.

Firstly, does the Minister know what is the longest time people have been on the waiting list for? Secondly, I know we have discussed here how prolonged delays in cataract surgery can have such a significant impact on patients' independence and quality of life. Are there arrangements in place to ensure that patients experiencing deterioration in their eyesight are reassessed and potentially prioritised?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I am hugely conscious of the fact that social media is actually a very good avenue for us to hear patient experience, and I do monitor that and I do raise those concerns with Manx Care. I am certainly not going to argue with patients that say they have waited three years. I have been given information that the longest current wait has been two years, nine months, for a routine patient. But, as I said, I am not going to argue with somebody's actual personal experience.

What I would say is that in answer to the question regarding being reviewed, it is my understanding that they are reviewed depending on their visual condition and when they have their last review. Those with worse vision are reviewed more often but this is clearly a demand and capacity issue that we have here, Hon. Members, which will take some time to resolve but with this additional capacity and additional business case going forward we are committed to tackle this as a priority waiting list. I hope that Members, as I said, will support that.

But if there are any specific – again this is the great opportunity to be able to speak about this, but if there are any specific patients that are out there that are suffering and would like to be reviewed I would urge them to contact MCALS, Manx Care directly. I am happy and Dr Chris Stockport would be happy to be copied into that to assure patients that they are being considered.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

1.8. Long-term vacant properties –
Number; published information; plans to address –
Resubmitted for Tynwald sitting

The Speaker: Question 8 is not to be asked and has been resubmitted for the Tynwald sitting next week.

TREASURY

1.9. Rising heating fuel costs – Mitigating impact on households

The Hon. Member for Ayre and Michael, Mr Broad, to ask the Minister for the Treasury:

What steps he has taken to mitigate the impact on households of rising heating fuel costs.

The Speaker: We turn to Question 9. I call on the Hon. Member for Ayre and Michael, Mr Broad.

Mr Broad: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I would like to ask the Treasury Minister what steps has he taken to mitigate the impact on households of rising heating fuel costs?

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister for the Treasury to reply.

The Minister for the Treasury (Mr Crowe): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I would like to thank the Hon. Member for his Question. Treasury has been monitoring fuel costs for a number of years and has intensified this since the outbreak of war in the Middle East. Disruption to energy supplies has led to sharp increases in retail cost of heating oil on the Isle of Man, and these prices are regularly updated when new shipments come in.

On the other hand, the prices of electricity and natural gas do not reflect large increases in the wholesale price of gas due to forward purchasing strategies. According to the September monitoring report from the Office of Fair Trading, the unit price of useful kilowatt hour of heating oil was between 11.26 and 11.7 pence. Natural gas was 12.05 pence and electricity heating cost 33 pence. So even with a substantial increase in unit price, heating oil is still lower in price than the equivalent natural gas and electricity heating costs.

Treasury needs to consider the principles that should guide policy making around energy shocks. In this case, fairness and proportionality are important points. It is challenging to justify support for heating oil customers when prices are comparable or lower than those that have been borne by users of other fuels for many years. With this in mind, one scheme designed to support households currently using all types of heating sources is the Heat Wise Home Scheme.

This scheme is set to begin in the next couple of months, providing grants and loans to eligible Manx households for the installation of air source heat pumps and retrofitting in other areas to improve energy efficiency. Together, these measures are expected to provide cost savings and stability to energy bills, therefore increasing household protection against international energy shocks.

As mentioned previously, Treasury will continue to closely monitor developments in fuel markets and respond accordingly.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Ayre and Michael, Mr Broad.

Mr Broad: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Hon. Minister for his reply.

In my constituency there are families that are having to choose between turning the lights on, cooking meals or heating their homes. We are getting dangerously close to a Dickens novel for some families on the Isle of Man. Can the Minister offer them some real assistance this winter, or are we really going to enter a Dickinson winter where keeping warm becomes a luxury rather than a basic necessity?

The Speaker: Treasury Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Member for his supplementary question.

The picture he paints is obviously one that none of us in this House would like to see, in terms of people being put into difficult situations like that. I am sure that there are benefits and support available from many Government Departments, including my own, in terms of Social Security, to help people in the greatest need.

In terms of energy costs, I have outlined some of the facts and figures, and I know that those can be quite stark, and I also note that the price of oil has reduced by 8% over the last five days. I would hope that there would be some benefit coming through to Manx residents as lower input prices lead to lower costs.

However, my Department, and I am sure others, would certainly be keen to support any residents who find themselves in that level of difficulty.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Glenfaba and Peel, Mrs Baptist.

Mrs Baptist: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

As the cost of living places such a strain on so many Island households, will the Treasury Minister commit to review the benefits rates and eligibility thresholds accordingly?

The Speaker: Minister.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I thank the Member for her question. The rates of benefits will certainly be under review as part of the budget-setting process for the coming budget that I will be announcing in February. Yes, I certainly can commit that Treasury will review the criteria and the rates in all those cases.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Ayre and Michael, Mr Broad.

Mr Broad: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Can the Minister tell those people, the vulnerable, the low paid, that are struggling households on the Island, if he will agree to a winter fuel payment for these people on supplementary benefits or pensions?

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Hon. Member.

I refer to my earlier comments about the strategic co-ordination group of senior officers within the Government. This was set up in the spring to monitor fuel prices and other risks to the Island. That currently meets twice per week, and they are armed with relevant facts and figures and feedback in areas that he alludes to. We will certainly monitor the situation, and should it become necessary, yes, I am sure that we, the Government, would respond.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Ramsey, Mr McGuinness.

Mr McGuinness: Gura mie eu, Loayreyder.

I would like to ask the Minister, has Treasury assessed how many households are facing significant increases in heating costs but are currently ineligible for existing financial assistance. You have spoken today about the Heat Wise scheme, and it would be lovely to have the capital available to take advantage of grants and invest in infrastructure and new properties, but that is not necessarily the case for a large swathe of our population.

I was wondering if Treasury has assessed people who fall outside of the eligibility for that financial assistance and, if not, how the Minister can be satisfied the current support arrangements are reaching those most in need?

The Speaker: Minister.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Hon. Member for Ramsey.

I cannot answer that question here today but it is a good question. I will get the answer from officers within Treasury and I will contact the Member directly to provide that information. Apologies for that.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Glenfaba and Peel, Mrs Baptist.

Mrs Baptist: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Will the Minister agree to fund a winter community warm spaces Initiative?

The Speaker: Minister.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Hon. Member.

I refer the Hon. Member to the comments I made earlier this morning about the Government's active monitoring of the situation and consideration of any assistance or support that may become necessary during the course of the winter.

Thank you.

1.10. Global Business Mobility and Worker Migrant routes – Suitability checks and sponsor compliance monitoring capacity of Immigration Service

The Hon. Member for Ramsey, Mr McGuinness, to ask the Minister for the Treasury:

What assessment there has been of the Immigration Service's capacity to carry out initial suitability checks, and compliance monitoring of sponsors, under the Global Business Mobility and Worker Migrant routes.

The Speaker: We turn to Question 10 and I call on the Hon. Member for Ramsey, Mr McGuinness.

Mr McGuinness: Gura mie eu, Loayreyder.

I would like to ask the Minister for the Treasury, what assessment there has been of the Immigration Service's capacity to carry out initial suitability checks, and compliance monitoring of sponsors, under the Global Business Mobility and Worker Migrant routes?

The Speaker: Treasury Minister to reply.

The Minister for the Treasury (Mr Crowe): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank the Hon. Member for his Queston.

The Immigration Service's capacity to undertake initial suitability checks and ongoing sponsor compliance monitoring under both the Global Business Mobility and Worker Migrant Routes has been assessed as part of the development and implementation of those routes.

That assessment concluded that the routes could be implemented within existing operational resources supported by the additional compliance, sponsorship and enforcement measures that have been introduced during 2026. We will, of course, continue to monitor application volumes, sponsor activity and operational impacts and we will review resource requirements as necessary. In developing these routes the Border Division worked with the UK Home Office, the UK Department of Business and Trade, External Relations and Department for Enterprise to ensure that appropriate operational arrangements were in place.

For the global mobility routes, employers are required to obtain a sponsor licence, as he refers, and applicants remain subject to existing immigration control. In particular, for the expansion worker route, we identified the need for enhanced scrutiny of sponsor licence applications, including checks on the legitimacy of overseas businesses, their financial position, and the credibility of the proposed expansion plans.

Additional safeguards have therefore been introduced and Border Division is arranging further training opportunities with the Home Office for immigration officers undertaking this work.

For the worker-migrant route, the employer compliance policy and the confirmation of employment policy, which came into effect on 1st June this year, strengthened both the initial suitability checks and ongoing sponsor compliance arrangements in response to the identified risk of abuse and exploitation. In relation to ongoing monitoring, the dedicated immigration compliance team is now operational and investigates potential breaches by both individuals and employers. This team works with the constabulary where appropriate and can take enforcement action where non-compliance is identified.

These routes were developed with these operational requirements in mind, and the relevant mitigations have been put in place. Border Division will continue to monitor compliance levels, application volumes, and emerging risks to ensure that capacity remains aligned with operational demand. More broadly, work is also underway to review the Border Division's future structure and resource requirements to ensure that the division is appropriately resourced to meet its wider responsibilities over the longer term.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

A Member: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Ramsey, Mr McGuinness.

Mr McGuinness: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you very much, Minister, for that comprehensive reply.

It is my understanding that many of the qualifying visa holders do not require a separate work permit. I was just wondering what checks are being undertaken to ensure that individuals are undertaking only the employment authorised by their immigration permission.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I referred in some detail in my answer to the original question, the level of operational capacity we have now to monitor on an ongoing basis both employers and employees here on the Island. In respect to his specific question, I will certainly undertake to ascertain that information and circulate it to him. However, I would hope that Members would be reassured with the comprehensive nature of the work that has been undertaken by the Border Division in this regard.

I would undertake to arrange a Tynwald Members' briefing to provide additional information, including the level of detail that he requires, at the earliest convenience.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Rushen, Mr Kemp.

Mr Kemp: Gura mie eu, Loayreyder.

Can the Minister confirm whether Treasury has a reliable mechanism to establish when temporary migrant workers and their dependents have actually left the Island, rather than simply recording the expiry of their immigration permission?

Gura mie eu.

The Speaker: Minister.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker; I thank the Member for his question.

I would undertake to include the information that he seeks in any subsequent communication or briefing to Members. This is a technical area and while I know that there are operational staff who are tasked with monitoring employees and their employers, I would not like to commit today to a direct answer to that question while I am at the moment not briefed on that level of detail. So if the Member would indulge me, I will endeavour to include that information with any subsequent briefing.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Glenfaba and Peel, Mr Davison.

Mr Davison: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

With the new employer compliance rules that came into force, can the Minister identify how many compliance inspections have actually been carried out, how many employees have been found to be non-compliant, and what enforcement action actually gets taken?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Hon. Member.

The Global Business Mobility route only came into force at the start of this month, so I do not have any ongoing monitoring stats available today.

With apologies for repeating myself, I would certainly undertake to include that level of information and detail about ongoing operational activity in any subsequent briefing to Members.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Rushen, Mr Kemp.

Mr Kemp: Gura mie eu, Loayreyder.

I will apologise to my colleague in Rushen. I know the answer that is coming. The May 2025 Pragmatix report, Management of Migration Information: A review of migration information management for the Isle of Man Government – that is a mouthful – identified shortcomings in the Government's migration information systems. Can the Minister confirm what improvements have since been implemented and whether the Immigration Service can reliably track temporary migrant workers throughout their permission, including changes of status and confirmed departures?

Gura mie eu.

The Speaker: Minister.

The Minister: I thank my hon. friend, the Member for Rushen.

I outlined in my original answer the level of additional resource that has been co-ordinated from across Government to set up the new Border Division and the level of activity, including training with the UK Home Office, that has been undertaken.

In terms of the detailed answer to the report, which I must admit to not have read, I would certainly refer to my earlier comments about including such information in any subsequent briefing to Members.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Ayre and Michael, Mr Broad.

Mr Broad: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Does the Minister consider Government has sufficient resources to check sponsors and monitor compliance effectively?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

The Minister: Thank you. Mr Speaker. I thank the Member for his question.

In my answer to the original question, I outlined the level of investment and resource in the Border Division and that has certainly been designed with that in mind, to have a suitable number of staff available to carry out those activities.

At the moment, we have got four officers who are dedicated to carrying out initial immigration and sponsor suitability checks, and additional officers on ongoing monitoring. So it is certainly our aim to be able to monitor each of those aspects in detail during people's residence here on the Isle of Man, but I refer to the comments I made some moments ago about a briefing to Members, and I would encourage any Member to ask questions or send me any information they would like to receive on this. I appreciate it is a new issue and it is an active matter and we will certainly include that in any briefing to Members.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Douglas Central, the Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister: Gura mie eu, Loayreyder.

Would the Minister agree with me that reports in the media of enforcement and convictions are becoming more common in recent months? For instance, this month we already have information about a 56-year-old man, who was convicted of two offences for facilitating the arrival of individuals and subsequent breaches of immigration conditions, being fined £7,500 per offence, £15,000 total, ordered to pay nearly £2,000 in costs and issued a five-year exclusion order.

Last month there was the admission of 12 counts of assisting unlawful immigration involving non-UK Nationals. Does the Minister agree with me further, just taking information from the website, if anybody has any suspicion of immigration law breaches, illegal employment or illegal working confidentiality in the Isle of Man immigration, they should call the Immigration Service on 685 203?

The Speaker: Minister.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Chief Minister.

In short, I do agree. I outlined the level of additional resource that we have put into the Border Division and, while I am aware of those cases, I am aware of other cases, in fact I have one on my desk today, where there is enforcement action being taken against an employer on the Isle of Man. Yes, I would endorse and agree with the Chief Minister in this regard.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

1.11. Rising heating fuel costs – Mitigating impact on local businesses

The Hon. Member for Glenfaba and Peel, Mrs Baptist, to ask the Minister for the Treasury:

What plans Treasury has to alleviate the effects on local businesses, including the road haulage and agricultural sectors, of rising fuel costs.

The Speaker: We turn to Question 11. I call on the Hon. Member for Glenfaba and Peel, Mrs Baptist.

Mrs Baptist: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I would like to know what plans Treasury has to alleviate the effects on local businesses, including the road haulage and agricultural sectors, of rising fuel costs?

The Speaker: Minister for the Treasury to reply.

The Minister for the Treasury (Mr Crowe): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank my hon. friend from Glenfaba and Peel.

Treasury is acutely aware of the impact that the war in the Middle East is having on wholesale fuel costs in the local market. I will not repeat answers to earlier questions, but what I will say is that Treasury cannot influence the wholesale price of fuel, and we are limited in our ability to insulate businesses and residents from global pressures.

However, when considering whether and how to intervene in the market, a set of principles is therefore required. Now, previously in this House, those principles have been included, ensuring that support had a clear end date, it assisted with longer-term resilience and was targeted to those in most critical need rather than being broadbrush in nature.

I am grateful to Hon. Members for their contributions to these specific matters during the Members' workshops that were held in October. The Treasury and the Government as a whole will continue to develop those principles and be prepared to intervene when it is in the best interests of the Isle of Man taxpayer.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Procedural –
Questions extended under Standing Order 3.5.1(2)

The Speaker: Now, Hon. Members, that brings us to the conclusion of the hour allowed for oral questions. Mrs Maltby.

Mrs Maltby: Gura mie eu, Loayreyder.

In line with Standing Orders, please may I extend the Question Time until we finish the Order Paper.

The Speaker: Chief Minister, Mr Thomas.

Mr Thomas: I beg to second.

The Speaker: So it has been proposed, Hon. Members, that we complete the Question Paper. We will go straight to the vote. Members, please vote now.

FOR	AGAINST
Mrs Baptist	
Mr Broad	
Mr Cannan	
Ms Christian	
Mr Ciappelli	
Mr Cochrane	
Mr Cowell	
Mr Crowe	
Mr Davison	
Ms Faragher	
Mr Henthorn	
Mrs Hewison	
Mrs Jenkins	
Mr Kemp	
Mrs Maltby	
Mr McGuinness	
Mr Moorhouse	
Mrs Poole-Wilson	
Mr Saunders	
Mr Shimmin	
The Speaker	
Mr Thomas	

The Speaker: 22 votes for, none against. So we will complete the Question Paper.

Supplementary, Mrs Baptist.

Mrs Baptist: Thank you.

Representing Glenfaba and Peel, my thoughts turn to the fishing industry, the largest food exporter on the Isle of Man, and they get a double hit because obviously they are out burning fuel when they get their catch, but also then they export. They are our largest exporter. They do not get any commodity rates from the Steam Packet, they do not have a scheme like the agri-environment scheme. Meanwhile, their European competitors are benefiting from state aid specifically targeted towards fuel costs. That is just one example on the Isle of Man, one sector.

I would like to know how Treasury are working with other Departments, like DEFA, DoI, DFE, to help our local fishing industry, other businesses and local employers?

The Speaker: Minister.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Member for her question.

I think it is incumbent on all parts of Government to work to support the economy in the broadest sense and I am very much aware of the work undertaken by colleagues in the Department for Enterprise in terms of dealing with local businesses. I have no doubt that colleagues in DEFA have a strong relationship with the producers that you refer to.

I refer you to my earlier comments about supporting businesses in the Isle of Man. There have been comments made in the public domain during the election campaign around food security and efficiencies around that area, and I have no doubt that the needs of our fish producers would be taken into account in any future discussions about how we best support those areas.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Glenfaba and Peel, Mr Davison.

Mr Davison: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Does the Minister recognise that rising fuel and freight costs are not just a problem for individual businesses, as such we have just spoken about fishing, but we also need to talk about farmers. There is a potential threat to the Island's food security, which is one of the biggest things we have heard this year. What is the Treasury doing as a whole to ensure that our farmers can continue producing food profitably and our haulage businesses can afford to bring essential supplies, such as animal feed and fertiliser, onto the Island, because at the moment unfortunately it is crippling the farmers.

The Speaker: Minister to reply.

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

I think that a theme running through a number of the answers I have given to questions today has been about how Government needs to work together to support industry in the broader sense and acknowledging the pressures that are faced by a number of our industries at this particular time.

I have also highlighted the volatile nature of the fuel market and the variations even in the course of the past week. I can certainly undertake that the Treasury will continue to work with other Departments around any schemes which currently exist, such as the agri-environment scheme, and any other areas where, when deemed necessary, it is resolved to carry out any other direct support measures for businesses to support them at this time.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Rushen, Mr Kemp.

Mr Kemp: Gura mie eu, Loayreyder.

Staying on topic, but tackling the Member for Glenfaba and Peel's initial Question from the inverse, has Treasury assessed whether fuel surcharges imposed by suppliers and contractors are proportionate to actual increases in fuel costs, and what safeguards exist to prevent businesses and Government itself being overcharged through excessive or unjustified fuel levies?

Gura mie eu.

The Speaker: Minister.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank my hon. friend from Rushen for that question.

It is a good question. I do know that the level of fuel surcharging that has been put in place by the Steam Packet generally has been consistent with that of other ferry providers and haulage companies in the UK, in particular. Obviously, I refer to my earlier comments about the previous quarter where Treasury, through our appetite for dividend, encouraged the Steam Packet to hold off on any fuel duty increase in that time.

But it is a good question, and I will resolve that my Department will keep a close attention to those matters to make sure that there is no abuse of the market.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Douglas Central, Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister: Thank you, Loayreyder.

Under the Island's customs and excise agreement with the UK, there is crucial operational relief for fishermen and farmers about energy costs to a degree. For instance, the duty rate on red diesel for farmers and fishermen sits at 6.48 pence per litre, down more than a third from its previous rate of 10.18 pence per litre. Following the UK autumn statement, the Isle of Man Treasury confirmed that this heavily reduced duty rate, originally set to expire at the end of 2026, has been extended until June 30th 2027. This was actually a major issue just before the election took place. [Music played]

So, therefore, UK and Isle of Man policy has already been to extend the rebate for fishermen and farmers in respect of fuel duty.

The Speaker: Despite that minor interruption, would you agree, Minister? [Laughter]

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you for the introduction music.

Thank you to the Chief Minister. Obviously, I do agree, and I apologise, I should have raised that in the context of my original answer, but I thank the Chief Minister for providing that additional information, which I hope is welcomed by the communities affected.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Glenfaba and Peel, Mrs Baptist.

Mrs Baptist: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I have heard lots of warm words today and I feel reassured that there is much monitoring that is taking place but that really does not pay the bills for these people. We have heard a little bit about red diesel, but I am curious to know – I would like to know what Government levers has Treasury identified that can be used to help our local businesses and employers? At what point will action be triggered, rather than just meeting and talking about it?

The Speaker: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Hon. Member.

I assure her that if the warm words she is referring to are mine, they are not just words, they do represent action undertaken by the Treasury and other Departments of Government. We all want to see the same aim, that people are not overtly impacted.

I also refer to the Members' workshop in October, where we discussed the principles that would be necessary in order to focus the attention for any support schemes to make sure they do impact those in the most need.

I have outlined the fact that we have a strategic monitoring group meeting twice a week at the moment, looking at the situation facing the Island more generally, but certainly individual members of it.

I can assure the Member that all Government Departments take this matter very seriously and, as has been evidenced in the past, if necessary, we would be prepared to intervene.

Thank you, Member, and thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Glenfaba and Peel, Mr Davison.

Mr Davison: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Before I spoke about fishing and farming – sorry, going on to Mrs Baptist's point about fishing and I mentioned farming, but I also want to talk about people in the regular households, and if Treasury has assessed how much of these increased fuel and freight costs are likely to be passed on to ordinary households through higher prices? For example, food, deliveries, building materials and other essentials. Has Treasury got a plan on how it is going to prevent that additional pressure on the cost of living for ordinary people of the Isle of Man?

The Speaker: Minister.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Member for his question.

I do not want to repeat myself, I think there has probably already been a bit of that this morning. I can assure the Hon. Member that across Government, Ministers, Members and officers have the impact of cost of living at the front of mind when it comes to supporting residents and businesses in the Isle of Man.

I can certainly assure him of that, and I will return to this House if it is deemed necessary to provide any specific support of particular types, but that decision will be made across Government and it will be based on the principles that we discussed with Members in October.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Rushen, Mr Kemp.

Mr Kemp: Gura mie eu, Loayreyder.

Evolution of my first supplementary question. What safeguards prevent contractors from recovering the same fuel cost increases twice through both higher contract prices and separate fuel surcharges, and has Government has audited its own exposure to this risk?

Gura mie eu.

The Speaker: Minister.

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

As I responded to his original supplementary on this matter, he identifies an area of focus which I completely agree with. To an extent, the market might police some of the some of the matters he is referring to when people see choice in the market. But he raises a very good point, and I will certainly take it back to my Department for further consideration.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Now, Hon. Members, that concludes our Question Paper, and it also concludes our Order Paper and so the House shall stand adjourned until its next scheduled sitting which will be next Tuesday, 17th November in Tynwald Court.

The House adjourned at 11:16 a.m.