



**St Helena
Government**

ST HELENA GOVERNMENT

GOVERNMENT OF ST HELENA
PROCEEDINGS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
FRIDAY 11TH MARCH 2022
FIRST SITTING OF THE THIRD MEETING

ST. HELENA
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

THE PRESIDENT

The Honourable Cyril Keith Gunnell

EX-OFFICIO MEMBER

The Honourable Acting Attorney General, Ms Aine Hurley

ELECTED MEMBERS

The Honourable Rosemary June Bargo
 The Honourable Mark Alan Brooks
 The Honourable Ronald Arthur Coleman
 The Honourable Jeffrey Robert Ellick
 The Honourable Corinda Sebastiana Stuart Essex
 The Honourable Martin Dave Henry
 The Honourable Robert Charles Midwinter
 The Honourable Christine Lilian Scipio
 The Honourable Julie Dorne Thomas
 The Honourable Karl Gavin Thrower

The Honourable Gillian Ann Brooks	-	On overseas business
The Honourable Andrew James Turner	-	On overseas business

Acting Clerk of Councils

Ms Anita Legg

PROCEEDINGS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Friday, 11th March, 2022

The Council met at 10.00 am
in the St Helena Community College

(The Honourable Speaker in the Chair)

ORDER OF THE DAY

1. FORMAL ENTRY OF THE PRESIDENT

2. PRAYERS
(Father Ernest Fritz)

3. ADDRESS BY THE SPEAKER

Good morning, Honourable Members, ladies and gentlemen and all those listening to this live broadcast from the St Helena Community College. Welcome to this first sitting of the third meeting of the St Helena Legislative Council. I will begin by explaining why this meeting is being held here and not in the Council Chamber. The Council Chamber, as you will no doubt be aware, does not have disabled access. Options and associated costs for making the Council Chamber suitable for people with disabilities to attend formal meetings of the Council are being considered. The Court House as an alternative is only available to the Legislative Council when it is not in use for Court related business. Fortunately the Community College building as an alternative was available to hold this meeting and I have heard this morning that it will be available to us for meetings when we do want to have it here in the future.

The business of this session comprises of three Sessional Papers, fifteen Questions for oral answer and two Motions followed by the traditional Adjournment Debate. I extend grateful thanks to Father Ernest for Prayers, Mace Bearer, Merlin George, for delivering the symbolic authority of this Honourable House and SAMS for broadcasting these proceedings.

We welcome back the Clerk of Council, Connie Stevens, under quarantine at the moment, from her Parliamentary visit to Jersey and I extend grateful thanks to Anita Legg, Acting Clerk of the Council for holding the fort in Connie's absence. Also, Councillors Gillian Brooks and Andrew Turner, accompanied by Legislative Council Assistant Shanice Phillips, departed the island on 9th March to attend the 2022 Westminster Seminar and thereafter Councillors Brooks and Turner will attend the British Isles and Mediterranean Region Conference in the Isle of Man. We wish them all safe journeys and will look forward to their reports on their return.

So, without further ado, I will call on the Clerk to announce the first item of business, please.

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –

Mr Speaker, possible if we could have permission to remove jackets?

The Speaker –

You may.

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

4.

PAPERS

SP 1/2022 – The Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Mr Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper 1/2022, the Supplementary Appropriation (2021/2022) Bill, 2022.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 2/2022 - The Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I beg to present Sessional Paper 2/2022 - Performance Audit: Benchmarking Health, October 2021.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 3/2022 - The Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I beg to present Sessional Paper 3/2022 - Supplementary Appropriation 2021/22 Estimates.

Ordered to lie on the table.

The Speaker –

Thank you, that's Sessional Papers dealt with. Next item of business, please?

5.

QUESTIONS

Question No. 1 – The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex to ask the Honourable Chief Minister.

The Speaker –

Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, my apologies for the delay, but my mic was not operational.

The Speaker –

Thank you.

The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex –

Will the Honourable Chief Minister explain why it was decided that Executive Council meetings should be held in closed session with no agenda items being made known to the public in advance?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas –

Thank you to the Honourable Member for her question. We seem to be having problems here with microphones this morning, so I do apologise as well for the delay.

Mr Speaker, the introduction of a ministerial system of governance has led to the enactment of a provision for collective responsibility in the Constitution. This differs to the previous committee system where collective responsibility operated by convention. This now means that Members of Executive Council are collectively responsible for any advice given to the Governor as well as matters done under the authority of a Minister in the execution of his or her office. At the Executive Council level, collective responsibility consists of two main features -

Confidentiality. The members of Executive Council must not reveal the content of discussions which take place. This allows for Members to privately debate and raise concerns.

Solidarity. The members of the Executive must publicly show a unified position and must vote with the Government even if they privately disagree with the decision that has been made.

In order to allow free and frank debate without compromising the principle of collective responsibility, Ministers decide that all proceedings of Executive Council are closed. This is the norm for Government Executive decision making in other jurisdictions. I am aware this is also the case in many other Overseas Territories that have ministerial governments. The Council Committee, the wider executive model, meant the wider sharing of Government documents and potentially was that previously led to parts of meetings being open. Not having Executive Council proceedings in open does not necessarily detract from the Government being open to the public. There can be more time given to discussing with the public decisions that have already been made or might be taken; I think the recent proposed VVIP visit is such an example, and consulting more on relevant policies and other cross-cutting issues. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Anyone wish to speak? Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and thanks to the Honourable Chief Minister for her response. Will the Honourable Chief Minister state why the Executive Council agendas and associated memoranda are no longer routinely shared with all Elected Members of Legislative Council who are also bound by

confidentiality requirements as prior discussion of these in caucus would not jeopardise the principles of collective responsibility?

The Speaker -
Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas –
Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would think that the comprehensive response that I've just given confirms that I understand it won't have any issue with collective responsibility, but I think it has been assumed here that things that have been discussed in Executive Council isn't being shared with the wider Council and that's not the case. Thus far, all of the information that's been discussed in Executive Council has not been information that can be shared on an open agenda, hence it is a closed agenda. We actually take the opportunity, as I've given the example, with the VVIP trip, to advise Councillors of upcoming information that's going to be discussed in the closed session prior to that being placed on the agenda and if that was on an open agenda, for instance, not only would Elected Members see this, but the wider community would as well. So, for example, with the VVIP trip, if that had gone on to an open agenda if ExCo would have been open the community would have known that something like that was coming before we had taken a decision on how that would have been discussed, so it's somewhat because of the confidential nature of the items being discussed.

The Speaker –
Thank you. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –
Thank you very much. I find it somewhat disturbing that there seems to be a presumption that other Elected Members can't maintain confidentiality and I would ask the Honourable Chief Minister to clarify whether that is what she was implying?

The Speaker –
Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas –
Thank you, Mr Speaker, I can assure the Honourable Dr Essex that is not what I was implying, it's more to do with the fact that if we're having open Executive Council meeting and having an agenda placed out into the public domain it would be the wider community that would also know what was being placed on that agenda. I'm not suggesting that our Elected Members or our wider Legislative Council members aren't being seen as having, honouring our confidentiality, that's not the case at all, it's more about the wider community and the fact that most of the things that we're discussing in Executive Council is very much confidential, so it's nothing to do with our Elected Members. Thank you.

The Speaker –
Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –
Thank you, Mr Speaker and thank you very much for that reassurance. However, the fact remains is that we've not caucused on many papers since the election, in fact, only two matters have been discussed with

all Elected Members that have gone to Executive Council, that is in a period of five months, so will the Honourable Chief Minister please give an undertaking to ensure that all Elected Members are involved in caucusing on key Executive Council papers that are not of an extremely confidential matter?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Dr Corinda Essex. You started off by making a kind of statement, but then ended up with a question, so I allow that. Were you asking at the end of that to the Chief Minister?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Yes, I've already asked that question, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Please?

The Hon. Julie Thomas –

Mr Speaker, what is somewhat telling here and something that we're very aware of is we are still very busy putting the structure or framework together for how a ministerial government will work, scrutiny committees, question times, are all things that all of the Elected Members in this room will know is being finalised now and I would hope that when we get that structure up and running that we'll have a better position to operate in. We must also realise this is a new form of government, we're no longer committees, we are, indeed, the ministerial government and it is left to the Ministers to take the final decisions, I'm not suggesting that Honourable Dr Essex is suggesting that they're part of the decision making process, but we must also be careful because the scrutiny committees if we share a whole lot of information the scrutiny committees and their roles could come under jeopardy here, but with regard to the fact that only two papers, as Dr Essex has mentioned, has been discussed, I do find it somewhat concerning that it would be suggested that there's more things that should have been caucused on and as far as I'm concerned the information and papers and discussions, decisions we've been taking isn't of the nature that would have any caucusing to be done on. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Julie Thomas. Er, do you wish to come back again, Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Yes, please. Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Chief Minister state how the views of the public can be made known to Ministers prior to Executive Council meetings unless there has been a full scale public consultation exercise, like, for example, with the VIP visit, if even the agenda is not made available to them or to their non-ministerial elected representatives prior to the meeting being held?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. As I said earlier with the example of the VVIP trip, obviously we did go out to wider consultation with the public regarding this, but prior to doing so, we obviously had discussions with the wider Legislative Council and that is what we hope to continue to do so that anything that affects or changes the whole of St Helena, then obviously we will discuss those, but as I've said before, a lot of the

business that we've dealt with thus far has been of a confidential, has been labelled as confidential or, indeed, commercial. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Thank you. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Chief Minister therefore confirm that decisions taken in Executive Council, except those relating to matters that have been taken out for public consultation, are based on the advice provided by the relevant officials and research undertaken by the Ministers themselves?

The Speaker -

Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas -

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I can assure you that that is indeed the case, I think I've stated publicly and in these forums that this government, that is myself with my four Ministers, are very keen to ensure that when we take decisions they are informed decisions that is evidence-based and I'm sure that my colleagues around the room will know that they provide us with good advice, but when we need additional information we don't hold back in asking for additional information to be presented. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Thank you, Chief Minister. Er, Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I thank the Honourable Chief Minister for her response, however, I would ask her if she would give an undertaking to, indeed, seek the advice of her colleagues around this table whenever possible?

The Speaker -

Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas -

Mr Speaker, as I said earlier, I thank the Honourable Corinda Essex for the question, I think it is something that has been talked about quite openly within the Elected Members and within the community, so, as I've said, as we've done actually, we will continue to communicate with our colleagues when we can and I think what we've tried to demonstrate to our colleagues as well as the wider community as soon as decisions are taken and it's at a place whereby we can share it, I know my Ministers and I go very often to the media soon after those Executive Council meetings, provided with the assistance of the Press Office with top lines and then we go and discuss and tell the community what those decisions are, so we'll continue to do that. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Honourable Chief Minister. Thank you Dr Essex for that question. Anybody else wants to speak on this particular question, otherwise we'll move on? Next item of business. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Mr Speaker, thank you. Will the Chief Minister, for the benefit of the listening public, explain the difference between Executive Council meetings and Governor in Council meetings, in particular, what is discussed at each and whether Governor in Council meetings is held in open or closed session?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas –

Thank you Mr Speaker for the Honourable Midwinter's question. So, the difference with Executive Council meetings, obviously this is going to be quite extended answer, so I'm not gonna claim that I'm gonna cover it all while I'm standing here, but I will say that generally Governor in Council can have some closed agenda items as well, thus far most of them have been in open session because it's Governor in Council where we discuss development applications and they are open to the public. The difference with Executive Council at this time has been that we've discussed more of the commercial in confidence and confidential documents that then, as I said, when a final decision is taken, we will share with the public if it allows, but if it's commercial in confidence we don't, but then as Governor in Council we probably will have requests that are of a commercial or it is confidential, so those elements of it will remain closed, but that will be said so. The open agenda will be shared with the wider community, as we've done in the past for the Governor in Council meetings.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chief Minister. Honourable Rosemary Bargo? I thought I saw your light up? Not now, okay, thank you very much. We move on to the next question then, please.

Question No. 2 – The Honourable Rosemary Bargo to ask the Honourable Minister, Health and Social Care.

The Speaker –

Honourable Rosemary Bargo?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Health and Social Care say what plans are in place for the immediate recruitment of Doctors and Nurses, and what plans are there for the retention and succession of such mission critical staff?

The Speaker –

Honourable Martin Henry?

The Hon. Martin Henry - Minister, Health and Social Care –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and thank you to the Honourable Member. As mentioned on a recent public radio update, the immediate term has been addressed by means of the Health Task Force whereby all vital medical staff have been recruited and are in the process of either arriving, undergoing final checks or serving their notice period elsewhere. However, we must be mindful of last minute cancellations which can seriously impact our plans. The immediate recruitment consists of both locum and long-term contract TC staff in order to address the immediate, medium and long-term needs of the island. There will be a strategic approach towards moving roles from locum posts to long-term contracts and up-skilling our local staff for primary care. Further work is being undertaken with regards to the demand for patients awaiting specific treatment and this will be informed by the requirements for this specialist treatment on island. However, delays in secondary or specialist care is also related to general international shortages for these professionals. Part of the new CMO's role, and just to add here that we've got an interim CMO coming very shortly and then a substantive one to start on 7th May, part of her remit will be to develop CDP links for clinical officers to ensure that they continue with their professional development. Once clinical leadership has been established, work can then begin on improving the practice. This includes handover processes, morale and general staff retention. It is understood that in order to have a fully functioning, effective team this requires more than just the right staffing levels. However, we must first deal with the actions to be taken. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Rosemary Bargo? No, no further questions? Anybody else on that particular question, otherwise we move forward? Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Is the Honourable Minister able to say how many Doctors and Nurses are currently in post and how many vacancies remain open?

The Speaker –

Honourable Martin Henry?

The Hon. Martin Henry –

I do not have that information directly in front of me, Honourable Member, I did give it in the recent update, however, we now have our four on island, although still in quarantine, our four long-term contract GPs here, as well as two extra GPs on island, the Surgeon and Anaesthetist is also on island, so that is at the moment a full quorum of Doctors for primary care.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Would you be able to provide a written update regarding Nursing staff?

The Speaker –

Just as we go forward, wait until I call you and speak to the Speaker. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Mr Speaker, yes, I was asking if the Minister would be able to provide a written update regarding Nursing staff.

The Speaker –

Honourable Martin Henry?

The Hon. Martin Henry –

Thank you, Honourable Member. We are still in the process of finalising some of the recruitment under Nursing, we have two Sister Nurses, which is very close to finalisation and we also, as I said in my recent update, we have had a really good response to our recruitment for Nurses in South Africa at the moment, but, however, they are still ongoing and to be finalised.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much for that question and answer. Next item, please?

Question No. 3 – The Honourable Ronald Coleman to ask the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Speaker –

Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Honourable Ronald Coleman –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development tell this Council, what are the plans for Jamestown Wharf and what is planned in the interim for making this area and its buildings safe for both the workforce and the public to enjoy?

The Speaker –

Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development, Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. With the creation of the new port or harbour at Rupert's Bay, current port operations conducted in James Bay will be relocated and this will create significant opportunities for an investment in a prime waterfront location. A Working Group was set up under the previous Council in 2016 to look at existing arrangements for the wharf and to explore opportunities for future commercial investment and how environment and open spaces enhancement could accommodate and provide opportunities for leisure and tourism and more importantly access to our seafront to improve the access. The Working Group commissioned a Master Plan for the wharf created by consultants Colliers, I hope I'm pronouncing that right. This Plan was produced, but was put on hold until such time when the wharf operations is relocated to Rupert's. For this reason, Crown Estates have been hesitant in granting long-term, sort of, interests. Short-term leases have been granted and they are repairing, so the leases that has been granted has been short time and the tenants are responsible for the maintenance of those buildings.

It is acknowledged that the railings alongside the defence wall outside the Yacht Club is in very poor condition and will be replaced. Replacement of the rails in front of the Yacht Club will be constructed from fibre glass as opposed to steel. This will hopefully help improve the longevity of the railings and

the investment. So it has been produced and those rails will be installed early in the new financial year. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman –

I thank the Minister for his reply.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Ronald Coleman. Honourable Karl Thrower?

The Hon. Karl Thrower –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Can the Honourable Minister ask why we're putting new railings on to a wall that is structurally unsound and I'm worried that we've addressed the long-term issues, that's what's gonna happen when the port moves over to Rupert's, the fact is that several of the buildings at the end of the wharf are now very structurally unsound. The public toilets and the changing rooms at the end of the wharf, for example, now have concrete falling off the roofs where the main rebar in the roofs is actually now splitting the concrete and I think that we should undertake that an engineer should look at those walls and the buildings at the end of the wharf to ascertain how safe they are for current use, not for future use. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Sorry, Honourable Karl Thrower, you started off with your question properly and then you turned that into a statement, then it ended up as being a part of a question, I think. Does the Honourable Minister wish to answer that, please?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you Mr Speaker, I will try and give an answer, as you said, some of it was a statement, but regarding the safety aspect I think if this is highlighted that we need to get an assessment done, obviously it is essential for the workers and stuff that is operating at the wharf to be protected. As for the long term, I mean, we have to take in consideration we only have so much finance and there is a long-term plan for the development of the waterfront, so do we spend the money now or do we hold off and do just the absolute essential maintenance until we are more, it is more known how we move forward with the Waterfront Plan, so, that is the question. I think the answer to my Honourable Friend's question relating safety is that we will undertake an assessment of that area to make sure that it is still safe for operations. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister state if the earlier report was ever formally endorsed?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for her question. The short answer to your question is, no, it was never endorsed, it was put on hold until such time that the operations are relocated to Rupert's. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you and Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Honourable Minister. What further work is it anticipated will need to be done to develop a workable plan for the future use of the wharf area as the Collier Report certainly did not cover all the bases?

The Speaker –

Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for her supplementary question. Yes, I do think that the Water Group Working Plan that was produced by Colliers doesn't meet all the requirements for a modern waterfront that take care of our leisure and tourism needs, so I would be suggesting and would be keen to set up a new Working Group under this new Government to reassess this consultancy's report and to see if it still meets our needs going forward, so that is a piece of work that I will undertake to do in the not too distant future. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Mark Brooks. Anyone else to speak on this question? I think I saw Honourable Rosie Bargo's light up first?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Member elaborate more on what types of lease were granted for short-term?

The Speaker –

Honourable Mark Brooks, can you answer that?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

So, yes, Mr Speaker, I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for her question. So, there has been some lease, a short-term lease, I'm not gonna talk too much in details, I don't have that information, but what I do know is that those leases was granted to tour operators and businesses that was close, well, needed to be close to the seafront to run, sort of, sea tour operators and so on, but like I said, they were short-term lease, because long-term plans, obviously for the wharf, will probably change in the near future.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Mark Brooks. Do you wish to come back, Honourable Rosemary Bargo?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –
No, thank you.

The Speaker –
Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman –
Thank you, Mr Speaker. Can I just ask what is the timeframe for moving cargo arrangements to Rupert's?

The Speaker –
Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –
Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. It is anticipated that the relocation to the Rupert's port should be operational in early 2023. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –
Thank you. No further questions on that particular item. Next item of business, please, Clerk?

Question No. 4 – The Honourable Karl Thrower to ask the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Speaker –
The Honourable Karl Thrower?

The Hon. Karl Thrower –
Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development tell this Council what is being done to address the island's problem of a lack of affordable housing, including but not limited to: easy to purchase affordable land; affordable finance and realistic construction costs?

The Speaker –
Thank you. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks, (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development) –
Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question although it does consist of I think three questions so my reply might be quite lengthy, but I will try and explain as best as I can.
So, SHG is one of the largest holders of land on St Helena. The Land and Building Disposable Policy 2016 states that SHG has an obligation to appropriately release Crown land and surplus or redundant building assets on to the market. Applying a duty of care to demonstrate a value for money, over the last few months we have released over twenty plots of land for both market rates and for qualifying first time buyers. The Property Team anticipate that an additional ten plots will soon be advertised for sale as well as two potential development sites. Additionally, we are planning to release thirty-three plots over the next year in locations such as Burnt Rock, High Hill, Longwood, New Ground and Young's Valley. While all of this is good news, I recognise that there is room for improvement and the Team are therefore working

to renew the Land and Building Disposable Policy to improve the ways in which disposal of land is done, including finding efficiencies in the disposal process and to reduce the average time for a self-identifying plot to be released for sale. My Infrastructure Team has also been working hard in collaboration with the private sector to release plots through a Comprehensive Development Area or CDAs as we refer to them. We have made good progress with the CDAs at Bottom Woods where two Government Landlord houses have been completed. Ten service plots will be offered to the public for sale shortly. These comprise of two plots for qualifying local residents, four plots for resident first time buyers and four plots to be sold at market value.

Recently, Executive Council approved the final plans for the release of eighteen service plots in Phase 1 of a development at Bunkers Hill. A mixture between first time buyers, residential and investment grade plots will go on to the market. It is hoped that negotiations will be finalised soon so that the development will provide a much needed stimulus to the local housing and construction market which should help take care of our needs for some years to come.

With regards to affordable finance, I recognise that mortgage rates available at the Bank of St Helena is considered to be high and if you talk to most of the community they will consider them to be unaffordable. That said, the Bank has made progress through the introduction of a reduced mortgage rate and deferral period for qualifying first time home owners and this has been in place since October 2020. More, however, needs to be done, so I have instructed my Sustainable Development Team to continue to work with the Bank to discuss increases to further access to affordability for finance, for a wider range of the community.

With regards to construction costs, we are exploring the possibility of a scheme where we reduce import duties on a number of additional building and construction materials and it is well known that the quickest way to increase economy activity is to stimulate the construction sector. With the continuing demand on the island, there is an opportunity for collaboration with the likes of the Bank and the construction businesses to facilitate a short to medium term stimulus, so in this answer to your question My Honourable Friend, I have tried to touch on three very important pieces of the puzzle –

Availability of land, SHG is doing their part in streamlining the processes, as I just mentioned; (2) Affordable Finance. My Sustainable Development team is doing what they can to encourage the Bank of St Helena to increase access to affordable finance; and, (3) Reducing Construction costs. My teams are collaborating on this, not just to look at reducing the import duties on additional building materials, as I mentioned earlier, but also to work with local contractors to introduce new, more efficient and greener construction methods that will ultimately lower the cost of building a home. If we can bring these three things or three very important things together, then we might see progress in our economy activity. Myself and my team are working enthusiastically to achieve this in the not too distant future. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

And thank you, Honourable Member. Anyone wish to respond to anything, ask another question, no? Er, Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. An updated and expanded Land Disposal Policy was nearing completion before the General Election, so when is it anticipated that this will be finally finalised and endorsed?

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for her question. However, unfortunately, I can't give you any definite date because the Ordinance is sitting with the Attorney General's Office at the moment. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you for the supplementary question and the answer. Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister state what action Government is taking to try and expedite the release of property at Bunker's Hill to a prospective developer and also address the issues that are preventing building continuing in the Half Tree Hollow CDA?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I thank the Honourable Member for her question. As I mentioned in my answer to the Honourable Karl Thrower's question, we, Executive Council have approved the final plans for the release of eighteen plots in Phase 1 of the development at Bunker's Hill, so I don't think there's a need for an expedite. If the developer is happy with what Executive Council has approved in the development agreement then he should be in a position to sign that quite shortly. As for the um.

The Speaker –

Honourable Mark Brooks, the Attorney General wants to interject I think. Honourable Attorney General, push your button please?

The Hon. Aine Hurley (Acting Attorney General) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I apologise for the delay due to the microphone and I apologise for my interjection, but because this is a matter which is currently under negotiation I would advise that discussion which could prejudice the commercial legal interests of either parties to the agreement that I appreciate that the Honourable Minister has provided an update, however, I would advise against any further more detailed discussion, as I've said, due to the matter is still under negotiation and it could be prejudicial to the commercial and legal interests of either party to discuss it any further at this time.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Attorney General for that interjection. Honourable Mark Brooks, do you wish to continue?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Attorney General for her intervention and giving us that advice, so I won't talk anymore about the Bunker's Hill, but I will just mention the other half of your question, Honourable Friend, is that the negotiations with the developer for the Half Tree Hollow CDA is now taking place, so, again, I'm mindful of what I would say here, but we should know something quite soon. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Mark Brooks. Er, Doctor Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

I thank the Honourable Minister for his response. In respect of Half Tree Hollow, how close is it to getting the sewage issues solved as those will also have a major bearing on when indeed that site can be properly developed?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Dr Essex for her question. I think with regard to the CDA and the developer, the sewage situation sits outside of that negotiation, so currently we're in discussions to try and fund that piece of infrastructure under the EDIP Programme, so I can't say any more than that, it all hinges on the developer moving forward based on what discussions come out of the proposal presented to the EDIP Panel. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Er, Honourable Rosemary Bargo?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

Will the Minister explain about the sewage system in that is this only in for the CDA development or for Half Tree Hollow as a whole?

The Speaker –

Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for her question. With regards to the infrastructure for the proposal that come to the EDIP Board for the sewage treatment in Half Tree Hollow, that is not just for the CDA, that is for the whole of the Half Tree Hollow, so thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Karl Thrower?

The Hon. Karl Thrower –

I thank the Honourable Minister for his in depth reply to my question, so I will just ask one question. If we can't get the Government-owned Bank to move towards better facilities for first time buyers, is it possible that we can in some way look at using Government funds to help first time buyers move forward?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question, which was, is it possible? Well, the short answer to that, pretty much anything is possible, so we will undergo to take some work to look at that, my Honourable Friend. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Next question, please?

Question No. 3 – The Honourable Robert Midwinter to ask the Honourable Minister for Environment, Natural Resources and Planning.

The Speaker –

Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Environment Natural Resources & Planning tell this Council, in order to protect the environment, what is being done to reduce or completely ban the use of plastics, foil packaging and polystyrene packaging?

The Speaker –

Honourable Minister for Environment, Natural Resources and Planning, Minister Christine Scipio? Please?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, if I could thank my Honourable Friend for bringing this question to the House. To date, there has been no policy direction to completely ban the use of plastics, foil and polystyrene packaging. However, in 2019, as part of the Overseas Countries and Territories Association Innovation Project, a Workshop was delivered by the Environmental Management Division promoting the import of use of one hundred percent biodegradable and combustible food packaging for stakeholders as an alternative choice to polystyrene and Styrofoam. As a result, Mr Speaker, many retailers and food vendors changed the use of polystyrene food containers to biodegradable products which, Mr Speaker, I am honoured to say is still being used today.

Last year, in line with the Island's 2020 Waste Management Policy Objective of Achieved Sustainable Management of all waste arising on St Helena through promoting existing, reduce, re-use and recycle activities and encourage and support the development of new initiatives, the Portfolio Directorate designed a project to develop a materials recycling facility which is a plant that separates and prepares single stream recyclable materials to be reused or sold at the Horse Point Landfill Site, as we would commonly known as the Dump, which was successful to external funding through the FCDO CSSF Programme. Mr Speaker, as a result of this funding, plastic waste will be compacted and bailed in preference to burying it. The bailed plastic will initially be used to support infrastructure changes around the site with a view to exporting this recyclable waste in the future. It is anticipated that a recyclable waste collection service from homes and businesses will be implemented during the next financial year, subject to external funding award. Mr Speaker, it is recognised that foil packaging is not environmentally friendly, but because of a single use nature, it is not known to be an environmental impact on St Helena. Currently, St Helena Government, along with the St Helena National Trust, have supported the Zoological Society of London in the application for Darwin funding entitled Turning the Tide on Plastic Pollution for Ascension and St

Helena. This Project aims to research the impact of plastic pollution on wildlife and develop, implement, test and evaluate appropriate mitigation strategies, trial innovative solutions and interventions and create conditions for island stakeholders to reduce single use plastic use and improve associated waste management efficiency.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Mr Speaker, I'd just like to thank my Honourable Colleague for that very extensive answer. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Karl Thrower?

The Hon. Karl Thrower –

Mr Speaker, I'd just like to raise a point of information really.

The Speaker –

Thank you.

The Hon. Karl Thrower –

Foil packaging is extremely environmentally damaging because in the foil packaging classification you have things like plastic coated foil packaging, which is what we would look at, say a crisp packet. Crisp packets are entirely unrecyclable and what happens is they have as much plastic on them as they do foil on the outside as they do foil on the inside. When it breaks down, the plastic obviously creates standard plastic pollution, so actually saying that foil packaging isn't damaging to the environment is actually one of the things the International Standards is trying to prevent at the very top level with tetra paks.

The Speaker –

Thank you for that information. Anyone? Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

May I rise on a point of information, Mr Speaker?

The Speaker –

Please do.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Just to say, in my exposition, to my Honourable Friend, Karl Thrower, I said it is recognised that full packaging is not environmentally friendly. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Anything further? No? Next question, please?

Question No. 6 – The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex to ask the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Speaker –

Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Hon Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development tell this House why the refurbishment of the fish processing facility at Rupert's Valley was not completed on time and what are the implications of the delay?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Dr Essex for her question. At the former meeting of Legislative Council held in December 2021, I gave a public update on the progress of the fish factory refurbishment project. This project is being delivered in partnership between St Helena Government and Saints Tuna Corporation, STC. At the time, I announced the delay to the project caused by the delayed delivery of the containerised blast freezer from the United States of America. The blast freezer and its supporting logistical systems is a change from the original refurbishment plans and this was to utilise modern, cold storage concepts which are much more versatile, carrying less risk of down time and is much less expensive to operate than an old conventional cold storage system that was at the factory. Unfortunately, global supply chain problems has caused further delays to the production and delivery of this freezer meaning that the factory will not be fully capable of exporting fish until the freezer arrives. The refurbishment period would have lasted until the end of the February, but currently commissioning of the factory is dependent on the installation and commissioning of the blast freezer. I am actively working with STC and St Helena Government officials to determine what is the exact date, but at the moment this information is not available as it would depend on external factors. There is also a further work required to enable the installation of the freezer which were not included in STC's original plan as well. To also, you know, this is a long prolonged unforeseen delay circumstances. SHG will work with STC to continue to implement interim measures within the refurbishment period to ensure that limited domestic fish processing can continue at the factory. STC shall continue implementing all remaining works to ensure that the factory is operated to a modern and global standard compliance facility and all remaining work is anticipated to be completed by the time the blast freezer is commissioned. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Mark Brooks. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I thank the Honourable Minister for his response. Firstly, can he indicate why the other work, that was not dependent on the blast freezer arrival, was not completed on schedule?

The Speaker –

Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank Dr Essex for her supplementary question. As I referred to in my answer to your original question, some of the works was not anticipated or recognised in the first instant, it was only discovered after the refurbishment had started and some of those works is the flooring at the factory, so that is why that work hasn't been completed because it was only identified after the factory was started. Thank you, Dr Essex.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

I thank the Honourable Minister for that explanation. Will the Honourable Minister state if it is correct that Saint Tuna Corporation, STC, cannot operate legally as a business before the refurbishment is completed and the facility fully commissioned?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and thank Dr Essex for her supplementary question. I will try and answer that question. The factory will not be completed for normal operations until the blast freezer arrives, so, in essence, the factory can't export fish, but there is interim measures in place that this allow for local domestic fish at a limited amount to be processed through the factory for the local market. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Just on a point of clarification, Honourable Minister, can you confirm that there is no legal reason why fish processing for the local market and provision of ice cannot be provided at this point in time?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Mark Brooks, can you answer?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Honourable Attorney General, would you like, you have your light going first?

The Hon. Aine Hurley –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I mean no disrespect.

The Speaker –

Could you just stand, please?

The Hon. Aine Hurley –

Sorry, thank you, Mr Speaker. I mean no disrespect to any of the Honourable Members by my interjection, but I would suggest that it would not be appropriate for the Honourable Minister Brooks to be expected to give a legal opinion in this forum if there is any matters of law and if Minister Brooks wishes to seek advice from the AGs Chambers we will, of course, advise him, but I would wish to say that it would not be appropriate for Minister Brooks to be expected to offer a legal opinion to this forum.

The Speaker –

Understood, Attorney General? Honourable Mark Brooks, sorry, was it Dr Corinda Essex who wanted? Yes.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Attorney General. Will the Honourable Minister therefore give an undertaking to seek legal advice on this issue and inform Elected Members of the response received?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Just to answer my Honourable Friend's question, yes, we will seek legal advice and I will inform the wider members of the Legislative Council. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you. And Dr Corinda Essex again?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Will the Honourable Minister tell this House tell what services STC is obliged to provide during the interim period until the refurbishment is completed?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank Dr Essex for her question. So, as I mentioned, there is measures in place for an interim period. The main impacts on local fishermen is the continued disruption to normal processing activity where they're not able or STC is not able to fully service either offshore or inshore until the works are completed. I don't know if that answers your question. Dr Essex, thank you. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Will the Honourable Member tell this House who is responsible for procurement of all plant and equipment necessary for the refurbishment, including the identification, ordering and purchasing of items?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, thank Dr Essex. I would just like to say that the arrangement is of the moment that STC their selves are doing the procurement and choosing the equipment and that what is needed for a modern factory, so the ultimate decision does lie with the STC Corporation their selves. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Will the Honourable Minister reassure this House that there are measures in place to actually check that the procurement that is being undertaken is indeed providing value for money?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, thank the Honourable Member for her question. Yes, there are checks in place and has been since the project started. The checks are done by our Sustainable Development team with the assistance of Attorney General's Office and so on, so, yes, we will continue to monitor, we will continue to monitor that we are getting best value for money, we do get, you know, the materials and all that and the equipment, sort of, presented to us before the purchase is agreed so we do have an opportunity to look and see and research on the equipment that is being sought after by STC. Thank you. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Will the Honourable Minister state who is the St Helena Government Lead Officer monitoring the project?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, thank you Honourable Dr Essex for her question. So, SHG representative for this project is the Project Board and that is chaired by Financial Secretary, Dax Richards. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Will the Honourable Minister state whether the St Helena Government's contribution of up to £500k for the refurbishment is likely to be sufficient to complete the project, and, if not, how any additional costs will be met?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, thank you, Dr Essex. So, I would just like to report that to date approximately £460k has been spent. As to whether it will be enough to complete the project, I am unclear about that and I couldn't give a definite answer on it, however, I can reassure all Members that no additional funding has been approved over the £500k that was originally approved for this project. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Sorry, I do beg your pardon, Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Can the Honourable Minister confirm whether or not STC have raised concerns with the St Helena Government regarding the commercial viability of the processing facility post refurbishment?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, thank you, the Honourable Robert Midwinter for his question. Post refurbishment, no, there was, sorry. Mr Speaker, can I just ask the Honourable Robert Midwinter to repeat his question?

The Speaker –

You may do that. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Can the Honourable Minister confirm whether or not STC have raised concerns with the St Helena Government regarding the commercial viability of the processing facility post refurbishment?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Robert Midwinter. Honourable Mark Brooks, understood?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker; I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. I am not, I'll be honest, I am not one hundred percent I don't understand the question exactly, however, I will try to give an undertaking that there is no, well, there is some concerns raised by STC, but it does not relate to the

refurbishment, it relates to the cost of the refurbishment, so there are financial concerns, however, they are just concerns, nothing has been agreed, or like I said earlier, for any additional finances at this time.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Is the Honourable Minister able to say whether there are concerns regarding the current total allowable catch limits that have been imposed by the St Helena Government and what is being done to address these concerns?

The Speaker –

Does that relate directly to the question do you think Honourable.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

It's my supplementary.

The Speaker –

Okay, I will allow it. Honourable Mark Brooks, if you can have a stab at that?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. As you say, I will have a stab at it, but I think in answering that question I will be giving you the opinion of STC, I don't think I'm in a position to answer that question, I think it's being asked to the wrong person, Mr Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member, I understand that. Any other Honourable Members wishes to speak? Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I might have missed it, Mr Speaker, but is there any estimated timeline for the completion of this factory?

The Speaker –

I think he said it can't be done before the freezer arrives, but Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Yes, I think you did touch on it, I did mention that the commissioning of the factory is related to the delivery and the commissioning of the blast freezer, so I can't give you any time limit, if we know for certain when that freezer was arriving we'll be in a better position, but right at this moment I'll be honest and say that none of us know for certain when that freezer will arrive as it's already been delayed past a delay, so, thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much for that. Honourable Rosie Bargo?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

Minister Brooks, with the delays this will obviously impact on the local fishermen and their ability to, and I'm making a statement here I suppose, sorry, but what impact would it have on the local fishermen to be able to deliver to their full potential and if it is an impact are they going to be considered for some funding to the local fishermen?

The Speaker –

Honourable Mark Brooks, I think I'm going to ask you to have a stab at that as well?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I think the question was would there be consideration for any funding to the local fishermen in the interim period. No, this hasn't, so, the answer is no, this hasn't been discussed. As I said, this period was never anticipated to last this long. Had we known that it was gonna be this long then probably something could have been put in place, but we're at this point now where we're seeing an end date, but albeit we can't say categorically what is the end date, but it is a conversation that maybe Ministers and the wider Council need to have in whether some support need to be offered, should it be offered and how can we finance that, so, thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you for that question, Honourable Rosemary Bargo are you coming back? Thank you very much. Any other questions on that?

Before we move forward, I can hear noises from out in the street, I'm not certain if the public listening to the broadcast can hear noises, it's okay is it, Liam? This isn't an ideal building for this meeting, but it is the best that we can do. Thank you very much. Let's move on, please.

Question No. 7 – The Honourable Rosemary Bargo to ask the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Speaker –

Honourable Rosemary Bargo?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development tell this House, are there any plans for SHG to have 'ready for sale plots' outside of those contained within Comprehensive Development Areas, and if so, when will such plots of land be made available to the public?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Mark Brooks again.

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for her question. The Property Section makes residential and commercial land available on a continuous basis for sale or lease. As soon as a suitable plot have been identified and processed these plots are advertised by tender in the local Press. Plots that are self identified by individuals are also processed. All sales/lease are done in line with the

Land Building and Disposal Policy 2016. But I'd just like to add to that, Mr Speaker, and give some examples to my Honourable Friend what has been achieved in the recent months. So, four plots were recently advertised for sale, two were advertised to locally qualifying residents and two was marked as value plots, sorry, and two is market as market value plots and they are now being processed. Two of these applicants have signed the Heads of Terms for the properties and the other two is in the stages of submitting their planning application. Three local qualifying residents for self identifying plots and nine residential market value plot owners for self identifying plots have recently signed the Heads of Terms for their properties. Five self identifying residential plots at market value were recently submitted together with two commercial plots at market value, other plots are at various stages for sale and lease. To add to this, three individual residential plots have been identified for advertising for qualified local residents and seven individual residential plots have been identified for advertising at market value. The two development sites that has also been identified for advertising, one commercial and one residential and this should come out shortly with the possibility of a total of twelve additional plots. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Nobody else, nobody? Thank you. Let's move on then, Clerk?

Question No. 8 – The Honourable Ronald Coleman to ask the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development

The Speaker –

Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development tell this Council, because of the continuing high rise in cost of shipping goods to St Helena and delays experienced via South Africa in containers, will the St Helena Government say what alternatives are SHG looking at?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. You're up again, Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. The current contract for sea freight services to St Helena is in its fourth year of a five, plus five-year contract and this is with AWSML Shipping. An annual shipping review meeting is scheduled for the week commencing on 14th March where a number of these areas will be looked at, including the volume of freight, the BAF or BAF, the Bulk Fuel Adjustment and the CAF, the Currency Adjustment over the past twelve months and whether SHG wishes to test the market once again. So, just to sum that little paragraph up, my Honourable Friend, we're in the fourth year of the fifth year of a five plus five ten-year contract, so very shortly we'll be coming to a mid point where we will have the opportunity to test the market again, but I will go on to say that we also have concerns about the ever-increasing rising costs of the shipping, but we must look at this with our eyes wide open. You see, St Helena is not the only country or territory who is feeling the impacts of ever-increasing freight charges. You only have to look at the news over the last six

months to see that across the world freight charges is on the increase and with the current situation in Ukraine we should be bracing ourselves for further increases, particularly when it's resulting in the increasing costs of fuel. Mr Speaker, we not only have to deal with the effects of Covid, very soon we will see the effects of this war. SHG, however, is trying; they have been reducing the impacts of some of the recent increases imposed on the services, the shipping services. We have been subsidising certain parts of the shipping services. SHG currently is subsidising the cost of transporting and barging the containers from Rupert's to Jamestown and I think most members of the public are well aware of this, we see it every time the ship come in that our cargo need to be barged round to Jamestown. However, what the public does not see is that we are also covering the costs imposed by the larger carriers, such as MSC, so this is also outside of Andrew Weir's control, so they are applying a peak season surcharge and an emergency container relocation charge. Now, I know nobody or not many of the public would have heard about these new charges because not secretly, but behind the Castle walls, we have been trying to do as much as we can to try and mitigate against putting any more costs on to the public. So, just to give you some clarification of what this is actually costing SHG, these additional surcharges cost on average £410 per container and if you include what we are subsidising in transporting our container round from Rupert's, which is an extra £500, SHG in total is subsidising £910 for every container.

Mr Speaker, after the upcoming shipping review meeting that I referred to earlier, we would probably be in a better position to determine whether it is in the best interests of St Helena to retest the market through an open procurement or whether SHG will continue with the five-year contract with Andrew Weir Shipping, so I'm hopefully will be able to give an update once that meeting has been held for all Elected Members. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member for all those details and thanks for letting us know it is the fourth year of the five plus five years contract, which quite probably many of us didn't realise. Thank you for that. Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'd like to ask if the Ministers have looked at using the MOD Line, which is, I believe, managed by the same contractors?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd just like to reply to my Honourable Friend's question. My chief advisor has just informed me that in the past this has been looked at, but unfortunately MOD does not carry containers and break bulk.

The Speaker –

Yeah, thank you for that. Honourable Karl Thrower?

The Hon. Karl Thrower –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Would the Honourable Member undertake to make public the extra charges that SHG is already covering on the freights, as mentioned in his answer?

The Speaker –

Thank you for that. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Karl Thrower for his question. Yes, if it isn't already public, then I would encourage my team to make this available so the public does get an understanding that we are not, we are trying to do all that we can to mitigate against the rising costs of shipping our cargo to St Helena. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Anyone else wish to speak to that question? No? Can we move on please, Clerk?

Question No. 9 – The Honourable Karl Thrower to ask the Honourable Chief Minister

The Speaker –

The Honourable Karl Thrower.

The Hon Karl Thrower –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Chief Minister tell this Council what steps are being looked at on Island to mitigate against any possible negative effects that the current crisis in the Ukraine will have on the Island?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I thank the Honourable Member for his question.

Mr Speaker, before I address the Honourable Member's question, I would like to state that this Government strongly condemns the Russian invasion of Ukraine and we are appalled by the human suffering and devastation being inflicted on Ukraine and its citizens. We would like our Ukrainian friends and visitors here on Island to know that we stand with them and are deeply saddened to witness the suffering of their fellow Ukrainians and the deliberate and terrible destruction of their beloved country.

The Speaker –

Thank you.

The Hon. Julie Thomas –

I now turn to address the question posed by the Honourable Karl Thrower.

Mr Speaker, Ministers have begun discussions regarding the potential impact for the Island, of the crisis in Ukraine, I can tell you that has been just earlier this week and it's been a very busy week. The International Monetary Fund has warned that Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the international sanctions it has sparked will have a "severe impact" on the global economy; it is inevitable, like Minister Brooks said, that this will mean that St Helena will also be affected. At the moment, the most likely immediate

impact will be on fuel prices, and Ministers are aware that wheat and grain products could also be impacted given that Russia and Ukraine account for around 30% of global wheat exports. Should the war become protracted, supply chains are likely to be disrupted which will impact on our ability to source, procure and ship to the Island.

In light of this, and as a first step, we will be liaising with Importers, similarly to how we did when Covid commenced, to understand whether there are issues being experienced, particularly in relation to our fuel supply, and, of course, our food supply and we will continue to work with all stakeholders to discuss how best to address these. So as we've now had initial discussions, soon, I'd like to say with the Elected Members meetings coming up that can be a wider discussion for all of us to consider. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. No further questions, no supplementaries on that? Thank you. Move forward, please?

Question No. 10 – The Honourable Robert Midwinter to ask the Honourable Minister for Health and Social Care

The Speaker –

Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Health and Social Care tell this Council what further booster vaccinations will be made available to the public, noting that the effectiveness of these reduces over time, and what progress has been made towards securing Covid antiviral medication for the Island?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Minister for Health and Social Care, Martin Henry.

The Hon. Martin Henry –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, thank you Honourable Member for your question. The Health Directorate in support by FCDO and HSA, for the listening public, which is the Health Security Agencies, they are directly involved with our vaccination programme and we will therefore await their guidance regarding the next round of booster vaccinations if required. The use of vaccinations and other forms of medication relating to Covid is always being reviewed and are constant updated as the situation evolves. Further programmes will follow this advice and updates. An order has been requested and placed for four types of different anti-viral drugs at various dosages which can be administered depending on the individual's needs and the stages of infection. In this order, there is enough treatment to cover over two hundred patients with a minimum of forty doses per drug. We are currently in the final stages of this procurement, but a set date for delivery is still to be confirmed, so it's close, we are very close, Sir.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Just to say thank you to the Honourable Member for that response.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Anyone else wish to speak? No? Move forward, please?

Question No. 11 – The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex to ask the Honourable Minister for Health and Social Care

The Speaker –

Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and before I read the question, I would like to declare my interest as I am one of many who have had unfortunate encounters with MSO.

The Speaker –

Thank you.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Will the Honourable Minister for Health and Social Care tell this Council what action the Health Portfolio has taken in response to the multiple complaints submitted regarding the performance of MSO and, in particular, the payment of subsistence to patients and carers?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister for Health and Social Care?

The Hon. Martin Henry –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and thank you, Honourable Member, for your question. The Health Directorate has provided feedback to MSO in relation to the number of complaints made regarding the treatment, care and pastoral support following referrals to South Africa. There has been, however, a significant improvement in the communication between MSO and SHG in respect of clinical feedback and follow-ups which is included in an update to the weekly referrals and review meeting on patients receiving treatment and in preparation in readiness for their return. Regarding the payments, initially, for security reasons an e-wallet approach was used to pay subsistence to those eligible. While there were some initial issues with this, through bank transfers and time bound access, people became familiar with this process and it became less problematic. However, the Covid pandemic and South Africa going into lockdown, going into lockdown, sorry, made it problematic to continue with subsistence in this manner. To address and alleviate this, MSO provided the subsistence in cash to those eligible. In addition, patients has been provided with some subsistence upfront where it was possible in advance of their travel. However, we acknowledge that this is not ideal for medevac cases. There are also some outstanding payment reconciliations being addressed and we are aware that some patients and carers did not receive their payment timelessly which has caused much distress. We will work with MSO to ensure that going forward this process is smoother as well as once reconciled we will also look at paying the subsistence owed to carers and patients. We are constantly seeking feedback regarding this approach and will confirm in due

course with an update. It is accepted that the pandemic has greatly impacted the offer of pastoral care, including support with using the e-wallet and, indeed, any hospital administration administered in both the UK and South Africa and I would just like to add, as a point of reference, to point out that we've had some issues with the UK and their care over the pandemic as well. We are now moving towards living with Covid and we will resume a service that meets the needs of our referral patients.

And, finally, all feedback forms from returning patients from the UK and from South Africa are currently being reviewed to inform the contract document. This will go to tender within the next four weeks.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

I thank the Honourable Minister for his response. When is it anticipated that the reconciliation exercise will be completed?

The Speaker –

Honourable Martin Henry?

The Hon. Martin Henry –

Thank you, Honourable Member. It will be, we will try to reconcile it within the next four weeks in line with the contract being tendered.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thanks for that response, Honourable Minister. However, there are individuals who have received no subsistence and been back on island for now in excess of eight months, so when is it anticipated that all arrears will be paid?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Martin Henry?

The Hon. Martin Henry –

Thank you, Honourable Member. I don't have a clear answer for that, but we will try to do this as soon as possible. I will give an undertaking to do this as soon as possible.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much for that. Honourable Karl Thrower, please?

The Hon. Karl Thrower –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Would the Honourable Minister mind saying how many or what percentage of customers who go away for medical reasons actually fill out feedback forms?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Martin Henry?

The Hon. Martin Henry –

Thank you, Honourable Member. You may be surprised to know that a very small percentage have actually filled in feedback forms to us. In a recent update which I think goes back to October 2021, there was some nineteen official feedback forms in terms of, sorry, nineteen official feedback forms in terms of complaints out of two hundred, over two hundred and seventy patients over a three-year contract period to date.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

May I rise on a point of information please, Mr Speaker?

The Speaker –

Please rise on a point of information.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, not all patients and carers fill out the feedback forms, because, indeed, the feedback forms are not totally adequate in some respects, consequently other individuals approach the Directorate through other means. For example, I submitted a full report regarding the MSO support services, a written report, and I also requested and had an interview with the then Senior Medical Officer and another member of Health staff to discuss the concerns about my husband's clinical treatment, so it is not just a question of checking forms, there are other mechanisms of feedback that also need to be fully addressed and incorporated into any exercise to ensure that all the information available is there for consideration. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you for that point of information, Dr Essex. Honourable Martin Henry, do you wish to respond?

The Hon. Martin Henry –

Thank you, Dr Essex. Not at this point, Mr Speaker, it is a point of information. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Any further questions? No? Next question then, please?

Question No. 12 – The Honourable Rosemary Bargo to ask the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Speaker –

Honourable Rosemary Bargo?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development provide this House with an update on the winding-up of the St Helena Fisheries Corporation?

The Speaker –
Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for her question. Mr Speaker, the winding up of the St Helena Fisheries Corporation or SHFC has previously been assigned to Group Head of Internal Audit. A significant amount of work has been undertaken to achieve the winding up of the Corporation. Unfortunately, following the resignation of the person in post, no-one was assigned to completing the winding up of this Corporation. Given the lack of resources in Internal Audit function, but I'm pleased, Mr Speaker, to announce that SHG has appointed a suitable qualified body to complete the winding up of SHFC or St Helena Fisheries Corporation and it is envisaged that this process will be concluded over the next three to six months after which a request will be made to AG's Chambers to repeal the St Helena Fisheries Ordinance 1979. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any further questions on that? No? Honourable Rosemary Bargo?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Would you be able to elaborate as who is the body to do the winding up of this, the Fisheries, please?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Mark Brooks.

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for her supplementary question. Yes, I can confirm that Prime Risk and Advisory Services Limited, a local registered company has been appointed to undertake this work on behalf of St Helena Government. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Honourable Member. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Is the Honourable Minister able to say what, if anything, has happened with the micro spool longline and greenstick equipment that was funded by the Department for International Development for fishing in vessels using local vessels?

The Speaker –

Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

I beg your pardon, Mr Speaker. Could I ask the Honourable Robert Midwinter to ask his question again and just slow a little bit?

The Speaker –
Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –
Happy to do so. So, will the Honourable Minister, is the Honourable Minister able to say what has happened with the micro spool longline and greenstick equipment that was funded by the Department for International Development for fishing trials using local vessels?

The Speaker -
Thank you. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –
Thank you, Mr Speaker and thank you for repeating the question, Honourable Friend. I don't have that information, but I will take note of it and I will undertake to find this information out in the not too distant future. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –
Thank you very much. Next question, please?

Question No. 13 – The Honourable Ronald Coleman to ask the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Speaker –
The Honourable Ronald Coleman.

The Hon. Ronald Coleman –
Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development tell this Council what progress has been made with the new Bulk Fuel Installation at Rupert's, the cost to date and when is it likely to be commissioned for use?

The Speaker –
Thank you. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –
Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. The Bulk Fuel Installation Project encompasses all the fuel system which was the design and install under the Airport Project and this includes the ship to shore, the bay side facility, the pipeline and the storage in the upper valley of Rupert's and also the airport fuel facility. To date, the total funding spent on the design, construction, maintenance and testing of the fuel systems under the Airport Project amounts to approximately £79m. The termination of the Design, Build, Operate and hand back contract with Basil Read allowed for a pause in the construction works to determine if completing the new fuel infrastructure to the current design is still the best solution for the island. A technical independent review was undertaken in 2019 which recommended changes to the method of fuel delivery and subsequent design changes. A further Social, Environment and Economic Impact Assessment was conducted in 2021. This latest assessment focused on how the different methods of fuel delivery could impact the community

which include the relative costs. Whilst the delivery method of petrol and diesel is to be finalised, the Project Board has now agreed the mechanism to take the project forward. The timeline, however, for this procurement of contractors, design, build, testing and commissioning is estimated to take a further three years. This process can only begin once funding has been confirmed from Her Majesty's Government. So, sorry, not much good news in that statement. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

And thank you, Honourable Mark Brooks. Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman -

Thank you, Mr Speaker, can I just ask what additional funding would be needed?

The Speaker –

Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Mr Speaker, we do not have that information to hand, so it will be based on I think the Project's Board and how we move forward and the design, the build, the testing and the commissioning if we are to change the current plans, so, to be honest, we don't have that information yet, because it hasn't been finalised what the final plans would look like yet. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman –

I just want to thank the Honourable Minister.

The Speaker –

Thank you also. Next question, please?

Question No. 14 – The Honourable Karl Thrower to ask the Honourable Chief Minister.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Karl Thrower?

The Hon. Karl Thrower –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Chief Minister tell this Council 'who is', 'when is', 'what is' St Helena Government?

The Speaker –

The Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon Chief Minister –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I thank the Honourable Member for his question. I have to admit we've tried our utmost to answer this, but I'm hoping that we will have encompassed what you're actually asking me for. So, St Helena is an internally self-governing Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom. On island we have a system of government which provides three branches of state, namely, the Executive, the Legislative and the Judiciary. In this wider sense, our system of government provides for – a democratically elected Legislative, a legislative body that makes the laws; and then (2) an independent Court system which interprets the law and administers justice; and, (3) and Executive who administer the government according to the law. This system of government operates continuously. In a narrower sense, the question may be directed more specifically to the Executive as the Government in contrast to a system of government. In that sense, Legislative Council is not the Government, it is not the Executive, the Public Service is not the Government either, but it is a tool of the Executive although in St Helena the Public Service is often referred to as the Government of St Helena and I think I've spent quite some time trying to determine the difference and make the community aware of that. Our Constitution provides that Executive authority for St Helena vests in Her Majesty the Queen. Subject to our Constitution, that authority is exercised by or through the Governor. Broadly, the Constitution provides that except when acting under Royal Instructions or in matters of special responsibility or under the authority of any particular law, the Governor must act, as far as St Helena is concerned, in accordance with the advice of Executive Council. In respect of the government of this island then, in the majority of matters, the Governor has to act on the advice of Executive Council. In this sense, it is the Executive Council that often drives the Government. Executive Council comprises of myself as Chief Minister and my four Ministers and the Attorney General who is an ex officio member and has no vote in Council. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Karl Thrower, are you going to, no?

The Hon. Karl Thrower –

No, I'd just like to thank the Chief Minister for her detailed answer which I'll go through over some time, because as she quite rightly said it's very complex.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. I'd just like to say that this question does come up from time to time and I've heard the Attorney General, David Jeremiah, give his version, I've heard the Attorney General, Ken Baddon, give his version and now I'm hearing from the Chief Minister giving her version. Thank you very much. Next question, please?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Councillor Coleman would like to come in.

The Speaker –

Oh, I didn't see that, thank you, Dr Essex. Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I was just gonna ask if the Chief Minister could give us that written reply so we can digest it?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Chief Minister, could you do that?

The Hon. Julie Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I can assure the Honourable Ronald Coleman that I'm happy to provide that in writing, I think it will go some way when we're communicating with the community and, indeed, give us some clarity when we are having discussions as well, so I have no problem with that. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, we'll look forward to seeing that. Final question, please and then we'll have some lunch I think.

Question No. 15 – The Honourable Robert Midwinter to ask the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Speaker –

Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development tell this Council, what is the total cost of the oxygen plant at Bradley's and when will this finally be commissioned?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. The total forecast cost for the Bradley's Oxygen Plant, inclusive of a containerised plant, civil works, utility supply, backup power solutions, underground oxygen piping or pipe work to the bed heads in Bradleys and associated commissioning activities needed to commission the oxygen plant is so far have cost £492k. The commissioning of the plant is broken down into two phases – to accommodate the global supply chain shortage of materials relating to oxygen distribution. As you know, Councillor Midwinter, we are still very much affected by the Covid when it relates to anything medical or anything relating to oxygen. So, Phase 1 is due to be completed by 25th March 2022, so this month, Sir. This will include the commissioning of the backup power system and the Oxygen Plant with the capability to produce high pressure bottled oxygen. Phase 2 is anticipated for the second half of 2022 which encompasses the installation of the underground pipe work for the oxygen system to the bed heads in Bradleys Camp, but again, this is pending the arrival of the pipe work, the materials that's needed to get the oxygen from the plant to the bed head, so I can't give you a definite answer when the complete project will be finished because, again, this would depend on the materials arriving on island, but, as I said earlier, Phase 1 is due to complete shortly and this will take care of our needs, our short-term needs for producing oxygen, albeit it will be bottled oxygen. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Minister for his response. Is he able to say what the original budget and completion date was set at?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his supplementary questions. Yes, the original budget for the Oxygen Plant in its entirety was estimated to cost £350k. It was estimated to be installed within six months, however, no-one at that time realised the effects that Covid would have on the supply chains, especially for this type of equipment, and therefore we are now in the situation that we're currently on. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Is he able to confirm that a significant component of the project, namely the concrete base was omitted from the original specification?

The Speaker –

Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. Yes, so the £350k was originally just for the Plant, obviously the civil works around installing the Plant, the pipe work and all of that would be an additional cost, that's why I said earlier that the cost is now at £492k. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Is he able to say what technical capacity exists within St Helena Government to prevent such omissions and subsequent increases from occurring in the future?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. As you can cast your minds back to the beginning of the pandemic, we into some degree was in a bit of a panic state, we

weren't sure what was happening in the world, we weren't sure how this would affect, we weren't sure if Covid would enter into the community, I think in hindsight we could have planned a bit better, but at the time it was deemed necessary to have all this in place as soon as possible and so therefore, some of the works wasn't anticipated, it wasn't until we understand the full concept of how this Oxygen Plant would work and what it would look like, then we were able to then realise that there were gonna be some additional works added, but as you are aware, Honourable Member, that on a small island like this we have never had the need to install this kind of infrastructure and we're only doing it because of the pandemic and lessons has been learned, no-one, we were doing this for the first time, no-one anticipated that this would happen, we couldn't pre-plan for this, we sort of reacted as best as we could given the limited time that we needed to prepare to get our island ready if in case there was a spread of community outbreak. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Mr Speaker, can I rise on a point of information, please?

The Speaker –

Please do, Honourable Member.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Mr Speaker, just to clarify, I'm actually making reference to the omission of a concrete base which I'm just concerned if we don't have the technical capacity to identify that there's a need for a concrete base then that is of concern to me.

The Speaker –

The concrete base, meaning what the thing stands on?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Yes.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

May I just rise on a point of information?

The Speaker –

Please do.

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

In relation to the overall cost of the project, the concrete base would have been a minimal amount, so I can understand that it wasn't accounted for, but this hasn't changed the price significantly to a degree that it would have made it that much difference on the public purse. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Mr Speaker, can I just ask in terms of projects now being undertaken by that Portfolio, is there the technical capacity within the Portfolio?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his questions. Like I alluded to earlier, lessons has been learned, so, yes, there is now technical advice in SHG. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Thank you. Are we all done, Honourable Karl Thrower?

The Hon. Karl Thrower –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Would the Honourable Minister be able to say if all the equipment at the site, such as the ventilators and that, is compatible with the high pressure oxygen bottles?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. However, I'm not a technical expert or medical expert so I would not be able to undertake and give the answer here today, but I can certainly try and talk to the relevant people and feed that information back to you. Thank you, Sir.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Karl Thrower?

The Hon. Karl Thrower –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and Honourable Member. The reason I ask that is simply that obviously it directly affects the capacity of this if we do have a Covid outbreak on the island and therefore I would ask that that's done as fast as possible.

The Speaker –

This is a point of clarification you're asking Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'd just like to acknowledge my Honourable Friend's question and to take that we will take that into consideration. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you all very much. And thank you for a very interesting set of questions this morning and thank you for the calibre of answers given.

Council Suspended.

Council Resumed.

6.

MOTIONS

Motion No. 1 – The Honourable Mark Brooks, Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development

THE SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (2021/22) BILL, 2022

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I beg to move that the Supplementary Appropriation (2021/22) Bill, 2022, be approved in principle and referred to a Committee of the whole Council.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Is there a seconder to this Bill? The Honourable Julie Thomas?

The Hon. Julie Thomas –

Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Mover, do you wish to speak to the Motion?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Yes, Mr Speaker, I do. First of all, Mr Speaker, I have in front of me, authority from Governor Rushbrook to proceed with the Bill under section 73(2)(a) of the Constitution.

The Speaker -

Thank you. Do you wish to continue?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Yes, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I'd like to speak on the Motion for the Supplementary Appropriation Bill 2022. Mr Speaker, section 105 of the Constitution provides that if in the course of any financial year it is found that the amount appropriated for any purpose is insignificant or that a need has arisen for expenditure for a purpose which no amount has been appropriated, a supplementary estimate showing the sum required shall be laid before Legislative Council. This Supplementary Appropriation Bill is presented today following the work undertaken by the Treasury and Portfolios to estimate the year end outturn of revenue and expenditure for the 2021/22 financial year. The Bill seeks to authorise an additional expenditure of £2.141m of which £1.929m relates to the current expenditure and £212k relates to the

Capital. This supplementary appropriation is planned to be funded through the existing budget allocations. Additional revenue granted during the financial year with a withdrawal from the Consolidated Fund. Mr Speaker, this supplementary appropriation estimates outline the additional expenditure requested and whilst we are going through these in detail at the committee stage I would like to highlight two key areas. Firstly, we continue to see a significant amount of pressure on our overseas medical treatment as well as aeromedical evacuations or as we refer to as medevacs. The budget lines within the Health in this financial year we have seen, sorry, the budget lines within the Health. Within this financial year, we have seen a higher number of medevac flights since the opening of the airport and this is significant more than what was budgeted for. A call has been made on the call down funding agreed with the FCDO as part of the financial aid package to cover these additional costs and, secondly, Mr Speaker, the area is also the Access budget, the cost of the additional chartered flight agreed during the year, these additional costs are to an extent being funded by the additional revenue generated through the passengers fare and the flight freight charges. Mr Speaker, I can now advise that the appropriation is proposed to be funded by a withdrawal from Head 13 – Human Resources and Organisation Development recurrent budget of £17k, a withdrawal from Head 27 – the Infrastructure recurrent budget and that amounts to £10k and a withdrawal from Head 29 – the Adult and Children's, sorry Children's and Adult Social Care capital budget of £30k. These two withdrawals are proposed based on the projected under spends within the existing expenditure budget. It is also proposed that an additional revenue generated during the year should be used to offset the additional expenditure with the following Heads: Head 17 – Treasury – 31.19m being an additional call down fund provided by the FCDO and external audit fees charged by Audit St Helena to non-government entities or NGOs and Head 21 – Access, of £560k being the additional revenue generated from passengers fares and also the freight from the Titan flight.

Finally, Mr Speaker, it is proposed that there should be a withdrawal from the Consolidated Fund of the General Reserves of the amount of £415k. Mr Speaker, we will go through the Bill in detailed provisions, we'll go through the detailed provisions of the Bill in the committee stages. I therefore recommend that this House, that this Bill is referred to the Committee stage. Thank you, Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you. So I put the question that the Supplementary Appropriation (2021/22) Bill, 2022 be approved in principle and referred to a Committee of the whole Council. The question is open for debate. No debate? The debate, of course, would be confined to the principles of the Bill. You may reply, Honourable Mover? Yes, go ahead.

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Mr Speaker, I would just like to, as I've done, raised in support of this Appropriation Bill, I think as we've, as Minister Brooks has pointed out, it is evident from all of the conversations we've been having amongst this Council and, indeed, the wider community, that finance is something of grave concern for this Council and this ministry and it is something unfortunate, but something we couldn't ignore as well because of the reasons for it, so I look forward to discussing in more detail in committee stage.

The Speaker –

Thank you. So I put the question that the Supplementary Appropriation (2021/22) Bill, 2022 be approved in principle and referred to a Committee of the whole Council.

Question put and agreed to.

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Mr Speaker, I beg to move that this Council do resolve itself into a Committee to consider the details of the Bill.

The Speaker –

Do we have a seconder to that, please?

The Hon. Julie Thomas –

Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Thank you. So I put the question that the Council do resolve itself into a Committee to consider the detailed provisions of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Council in Committee.

The Chairman –

Do you need to have someone come to the table with you?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Mr Speaker, yes, I would like to invite the Financial Secretary and the Deputy Financial Secretary to come to the table to take us through the provisions of the Bill. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Chairman –

Thank you, all seated. So, Honourable Members will need to have the Estimates available to be considered at the same time as we're going through the Bill and because this is a money bill, an appropriation, we first need to work through the Schedules, the Schedule itself, so Schedule I. Financial Secretary, I invite you to go through.

Mr Dax Richards (Financial Secretary) -

Mr Chair, I think you have to, we normally do the Title and Enacting Clause first and then we move on to the Schedules thereafter.

The Chairman –

But we normally do the Schedules first. I said we normally do the Schedules first. So, can we look at the Short Title? So Schedule I?

Mr Dax Richards –

Mr Chair, I think you are right, you do the Title first and then you go into the Schedules and then you come back to the Enacting Clause.

The Chairman –

So I put the question that the Title, the Enacting Clause and Clause 1 do stand part of the Bill. Any Member wish to speak on that? No? So then we need to work through the remainder of the Bill clause by clause or by groups of clauses, each preceding by the Chairman putting the question.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

We need to consider the schedule first.

The Chairman -

Yeah, this is what I was saying actually.

Mr Dax Richards –

So you need to take a vote on the Title, Mr Chair, and then you move on to the Schedules and then we come back to Enacting Clause 2.

Title, Enacting Clause and Clause 1.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

So now we move to the Schedules and Financial Secretary I'll ask you to take us through that, please? So, you want me to announce all that, okay, I'll do that. So, Head of Expenditure 12 – Central Support Service - £2k.

Mr Nicholas Yon (Deputy Financial Secretary) –

Thank you, Mr Chairman. So this is for the Central Support Service and it is to finance some Health and Safety improvements to the office for Councillors and it is to purchase some small items of furniture to address some of the lighting issues that currently exist and this was in a provision that was in the existing budget, so this is a request for a additional £2k.

The Chairman –

Thank you. Any questions on that from any Members? No? Move on.16 – Judicial Services.

Mr Dax Richards –

You have to vote on it now, Mr Chair.

The Chairman –

I got to vote on each one, it is true.

Head 12 – Central Support Services - £2k.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

We go on to the next line. 16 – Judicial Services - £6k.

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Thank you. So, under the Judicial Services Head of Expenditure, the request for additional budget is to finance increase for the change in the Chief Justice remuneration package that came into effect part way through this financial year and in addition to that the telecoms costs, the internet costs associated with undertaking virtual court proceedings in Jamestown here in the Court in this financial year as well, so those two make up the reasons for the additional £6k.

The Chairman –

Thank you for explaining that.

Head 16 – Judicial Services - £6k.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman -

We move on to the next line. Head 17 – Treasury - £85k.

Mr Nicholas Yon –

So this particular request is a result of an anomaly in the current Special Fund Order for St Helena Audit Service Trading Account. So, as it currently stands, the fees, only fees that are generated through audits of St Helena Government can go to the Special Fund. Any work that St Helena Audit, Audit St Helena does external to SHG those fees cannot go directly into the Special Fund and therefore all of those external fees must be paid into the Consolidated Fund first and then transferred from the Consolidated Fund into the Special Fund for the Trading Account. So what we've done here is to ask for the additional approval to make the transfer from the Consolidated Fund via the Treasury budget into the Special Fund for Audit St Helena. The funds have been received and these are the actual costs that now need to be transferred.

The Chairman –

So I put the question, all those in favour of that say Aye.

Head 17 – Treasury - £85k.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

So we move on to the next line which is 21 – Access - £711k.

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Thank you. So this particular line relates to the charter costs or the charter flight costs, sorry, that was done through Titan Airways in this financial year. At the beginning of the financial year, we made an assumption about the number of flights that would be required and then during this financial year it was agreed that additional charter flights could be put on and so what this does is give us the authority to be able to spend those funds for the cost of the charter flight. I just wanted to also note that this cost is the gross cost, it is the expenditure, but there will be revenues that will come in as well to offset this budget.

The Chairman –

Thank you. So I put the question that stands part of the Bill as well. Those in favour say Aye.

Head 21 – Access - £711k.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas –

Mr Chairman, I think we need to just say exactly what the question is that we're actually approving, because it needs to be clear to the listening public exactly which Head of Expenditure we're actually approving or saying Aye to.

The Chairman –

Correct, thank you for that. Yes, we are of course working through the Head of Expenditure and we did look at 12 – Central Support Services - £2k; 16 – Judicial Services - £6k; Treasury - £85k and just then Access 21 - £711k and all those in favour say Aye to all of that. We've been through the expenditure.

Mr Dax Richards –

Mr Chair, I think it is customary that you ask Members if they have any questions they would like to ask on and that before we actually vote on that.

The Chairman –

Okay. So, any question then on that particular line – 21 – Access, £711K? Anybody?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

How many additional charter flights does this relate to?

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Yes, so, it is three additional flights.

The Chairman –

Thank you. Any further questions on that? No, so we move on to the next one, please. That is Health 23. So I put the question then that all those in favour of that particular item, £711k – Treasury, say Aye. Access, say Aye and those of a contrary opinion say No.

Sorry, I'm getting myself sort of twisted up here, I do beg your pardon, what I should have said was Head of Expenditure 21 – Access - £711k.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

So we move on to the next item which is Head of Expenditure 23 – Health, in the amount of £1,125m. Nicholas?

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Thank you. So this particular area under Health relates to overseas medical referrals, medical treatment and the aeromedical evacuation costs, so during the year we would have made assumptions about the number of people that would have to go for treatment and what types of treatment, we had to make assumptions around the number of flights that we estimate would be required and what has happened is that these budgets have been exceeded in the year because of the number of patients having to go for treatment, types of treatment and also the number of aeromedical evacuation flights that have left the island this year. I think at the end of December it was sixteen flights and since then there's been a further five flights for January, February and the beginning of March, so, again, these are significant pressure areas that were identified at the beginning and now we're trying to get the approval to make sure that that can be cleared.

The Chairman –

Thank you very much. Honourable Martin Henry?

The Hon. Martin Henry –

Mr Speaker, I would like to propose an amendment to Head 23 which is to increase the expenditure from £1,125m to £1,377m. To explain, Mr Chair?

The Chairman –

Thank you.

The Hon. Martin Henry –

The budget at present included a provision for one aeromedical flight each month up until the end of March 2022. We have already had an additional two flights on top of what was included in the budget today. The additional £252k will cover the two additional flights and make provisions for four further flights up until 31st March.

The Chairman –

Thank you very much. Any further questions to that? So, we have a proposal for an amendment from £1,125m to £1,237. Is there a seconder to the amendment?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Mr Chairman, I support and second the Motion and I'd just like to add that I do have prior approval from the Governor to proceed. Thank you.

The Chairman –

Thank you for that. So I put the question that Head 23 – Health, so I put the question that as amended this stand part of the Bill. Somebody else wants to speak the Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Yes, Mr Chairman, I believe that we invite Members to speak on the amendment before we vote on it, so I'm certain that the listeners probably wondering what's going on and it's my understanding and I can be corrected by our Acting Attorney General, that any increase proposed to the Supplementary Appropriation Bill can only be made by an Executive Council Member, which has happened today, so I just want to

make sure that the listeners are fully aware of the process, but like I said, I can be corrected or it can be confirmed by the Acting Attorney General. Mr Speaker, like I said, this is just for the listening public.

The Chairman –

Attorney General, can you confirm? No, no need to stand.

The Hon. Aine Hurley (Acting Attorney General) –

Thank you to the Honourable Member and the process I would confirm has been correct and followed today as in it has been proposed by an Executive Council Member and there has also been reflected in the public record that there was approval from the Governor and therefore there are no issues with this process I wish to confirm.

The Chairman –

Thank you. Anybody else would like to speak on that? No?

Head 23 – Health, as amended, from £1,125m to £1,277m

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Thank you. So we move on to Schedule II, Capital Expenditure.

Mr Dax Richards –

Sorry, Mr Chair, we also have to approve the total of the Schedule I, so you have to have an amended total for Schedule I to account for the amendment which was just approved.

The Chairman –

Okay, just for the reference, so the Schedule then, the total amendment then would be £1,277m?

Mr Dax Richards –

The total for Schedule I, Mr Chair, is now £2,181m.

The Chairman –

£2,181m. The total now then would be, thank you very much for that, £2,181m being the total for Health – 23 – Expenditure.

Head 23 – Health - £2,181m.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Honourable Julie Thomas?

The Hon. Julie Thomas –

Mr Chairman, I don't think it is for Health, I think what we're saying is that is the total for the whole thing.

The Chairman –
For the whole thing.

The Hon. Julie Thomas –
Yes, for Schedule I, so it's £2,181m for the entire Schedule I. The Head of Expenditure 23 – Health, is now £1,377m.

The Chairman –
£1,377m.

The Hon. Julie Thomas –
So if we vote on Schedule I, the total is £2,181m.

The Chairman –
Thank you for that correction, Honourable Julie Thomas. Quite correct, the 23 – Health is £1,377m and, of course, making the total £2,181m, so we vote on the Schedule - £2,181m.

Schedule I - £2,181m.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –
Thank you for that and thanks very much for those corrections, thank you very much. So we move on now to Schedule II – Capital Expenditure and Head of Expenditure 17 – Treasury - £77k. Mr Yon?

Mr Nicholas Yon –
Thank you, Mr Chairman. So, this relates to the funding set aside for the investment in fish processing plant, so it is the overall budget included in the original budget is £500k and when we appropriate we appropriate so much for recurrent purposes and so much for capital elements and what the request here is, is to move funding from the recurrent element of that £500k into the capital element, it's just to rebalance it so that we can get the accounting correct, but it doesn't exceed in any way the £500k, the original allocation.

The Chairman –
Thank you very much. So any further questions, comments on that? No?

Head 17 – Treasury - £77k.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –
Thank you for that and then we move on to Health then, Head of Expenditure 23 – Health in the amount of £125k. Mr Yon?

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Thank you. So, for this particular area, it relates to the installation of the Oxygen Plant at Bradleys, so this is the cost that is associated with that installation now which needs to be capitalised as part of that process.

The Chairman –

Thank you very much. Any further questions to that? No?

Head 23 – Health - £125k.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

And the last item under Head of Expenditure 27 – Infrastructure - £10k. Mr Yon?

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Thank you. So, for Infrastructure, this relates to the Building Maintenance section and the request here is to move funds they have under their recurrent budget to the capital budget to be able to purchase two additional bus shelters that is planned to be installed, so like I say, the funding is in the recurrent budget they have, because of the way we do our accounting it has to be accounted for under capital expenditure and so they're asking, request to move from the recurrent budget to the capital budget.

The Chairman –

Thank you for that, Mr Yon. Any questions from anyone on that? Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Can I ask if that is in respect of the bus shelters that are already on island or two additional ones?

Mr Dax Richards –

Um bus shelters going out to, that can help the hospitals bus route.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you for that clarification.

The Chairman –

Thank you very much. Any further questions on that?

Head 27 – Infrastructure - £10k.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

So now then we look at the total for Schedule II in the amount of £212k. Any questions about that? None?

Schedule II - £212k.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Thank you very much. So right now we turn back to the main part of the Bill. The Title, the Enactment Clause and Clause 1. So we look at the Title, the Enacting Clause and Clause 1. Clause 2 – Consolidated Fund, provision for the financial year 2021 to 2022. Anyone wishes to speak?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Yes, Mr Chairman. So, there needs to be an amendment for the amount not exceeding under 2, £2,393 thousand.

The Chairman –

£2,393 thousand.

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Yes and that will reflect the changes in place.

The Chairman –

And that will be to what?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Reflect the changes.

The Chairman –

To reflect the changes. Thank you for that.

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

In the Schedule.

The Chairman –

So I put the question to the amendment then.

Mr Dax Richards –

Seconded.

The Chairman –

A seconder first of all, do we have a seconder for that?

The Hon. Julie Thomas –

Mr Chairman, I beg to second.

The Chairman –

Thank you very much for that.

Question that Schedule II be amended to read £2,393m to reflect the changes made, put and agreed to.

The Chairman –
We go back into.

Council Resumed.

The Speaker –
So the President moves back to the bench. Mover, do you wish to make a report?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –
Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I beg to report that the Supplementary Appropriation (2021/22) Bill, 2022 passed the Committee with three amendments and to move that this Council approves the said Bill and recommends to the Governor that it should be enacted.

The Speaker –
Thank you, Honourable Mover. Is there a seconder to that?

The Hon. Julie Thomas –
Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –
Thank you very much. So I put the question that this Council approves the Supplementary Appropriation (2021/22) Bill, 2022 with three amendments and recommends to the Governor that it should be enacted. I ask anyone to speak who wish to speak, the debate henceforth would only be to the principles and not details at this stage. You may respond if you wish, Honourable Mover? No, nothing further to add.

Question that Council approves the Supplementary Appropriation (2021/22) Bill, 2022, as amended, and recommends to the Governor that it should be enacted, put and agreed to.

The Motion is carried.

The Speaker –
That was hard work. Shall we move on to the next item of business then?

Motion No. 2 – The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex.

The Speaker –
The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –
Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable Council resolves that the St Helena Government expedites preparation of a project proposal to rectify the inadequacies of the current irrigation system at the ex-ADA fields, in order to enable increased agricultural production.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there a seconder to this Motion? Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Mr Speaker, I rise in support of this Motion

The Speaker –

Honourable Karl Thrower?

The Hon. Karl Thrower –

Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Are you seconding, are you, okay. Thank you, Mr Thrower. Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Mover, do you wish to speak to the Motion now?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Yes, thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I firstly declare my interest as President of the St Helena Chamber of Commerce.

Mr Speaker, food security is becoming an increasingly pressing priority for St Helena as we see our already flat line economy hit by exogenous shocks over which we have little or no control. We are already facing the knock-on effects of the Covid-19 pandemic which includes increases in freight charges, the difficulties in sourcing some items from overseas and considerable delay in receiving essential supplies. It is almost inevitable that current events in Ukraine and Soviet sanctions will make the situation considerably worse, let alone what would be the consequences for our overseas supply chain if a global war were to break out. Therefore, it is of the greatest importance that St Helena becomes more self sufficient by increasing local agriculture production substantially. The more we can grow or raise locally the better protected we will be against the negative impacts of what is happening overseas. Furthermore, local production helps our economy and we keep our money on the island instead of it going overseas to pay for the items that we import. We cannot bury our heads in the sand and hope that we will be able to continue importing all the items we get from overseas now in the same quantities and affordable prices going forward, we already realise this is not realistic. Just look at the recent increases in freight charges due to the rise in world fuel prices and the difficulties of moving containers from country to country as a result of the pandemic.

Mr Speaker, if St Helena is not to face serious risk of not getting sufficient food to feed its population adequately in the future, local production must increase from now on and it cannot do so unless our prime agricultural land can be fully utilised. The ex-ADA fields at Longwood are a prime site for arable farming, but at present those working ground there cannot make full use of it because the current irrigation system is inadequate, even for the current level of production let alone any increase. The Chamber of Commerce, together with some Elected Members, have been working with the people at Scotland and Connect to get options costed and submitted for potential funding. Work towards this has already started, but it is of utmost importance that momentum is maintained and project preparation is expedited. Therefore, Mr Speaker, I seek the support of this Honourable House in recognising the inadequacies of the present irrigation system and enabling increased agriculture production so that it will help improve St Helena's food security. Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Members, the Motion is that the St Helena Government expedites preparation of their project proposal to rectify the inadequacies of the current irrigation system at the ex-ADA fields in order to enable increased agricultural production. Does anyone else wish to speak on that? Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the Motion and a well done of the capable words of Dr Essex or to Honourable Dr Essex deep words which is to illustrate that food security is of the utmost importance um currently. So, the Motion, so I support the Motion as it's been identified recently that there is inadequate irrigation systems currently in place and this needs to be addressed if we are ever to increase um our agricultural production, so I do rise in support. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Anybody else wish to speak? Honourable Rosemary Bargo?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I rise in support of this Motion. As the representative for Longwood, I've had several meetings with the farming community and one of the key issues that is regularly communicated to me is the need for improved water storage and distribution. It is a simple fact that in order to bring good produce farmers need good access to water and any improvement that can be made to the current irrigation system at ex-ADA fields would be clearly welcomed. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any other Members wish to speak? Honourable Karl Thrower?

The Hon. Karl Thrower –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would just like to um my Honourable Colleague in her presentation speech obviously coming from economic reasons for expediting um project. However, my support more on the technical side of the problem with farming.

The Speaker –

Um no I think it's best to speak.

The Hon. Karl Thrower –

Is my microphone not working now? Sorry I must apologise for the microphone system. So, what I would like to cover is more about the technical problems that we've currently got at the ex-ADA fields with the current system. So, currently at the moment we have three reservoirs on site, two of them are medium sized and one is a smaller one. An irrigation system was installed a few years ago, however, it's completely inadequate for the needs of the farmers at the moment. To give a clear, clear, um, part of this is that currently because you have to activate the irrigation system from a pump house only one farmer can use the irrigation system at any one time, so, as the farmers explained to us during our site visits, quite literally they have to wait in turn to be able to irrigate their crops. Now, any farmer will tell you that that's really not ideal because when you have a dry period of weather, for example, they all want to be able to irrigate their crops at the same time otherwise they lose a large quantity of that crop. The other problem is that the system isn't pressurised enough to utilise the most water efficient irrigation systems, so not only

are we not, we're losing crops because we can't irrigate them, we're also wasting a lot of water irrigating those crops because we can't have a pressurised system and these changes must be addressed in order to increase our production and make us a lot more self sustainable in the future.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any other Member wish to speak? No? So Honourable Rob Midwinter, please?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Mr Speaker, I rise in support of this motion, as I strongly believe that we, as an island, need to be doing all that we can to improve food security, particularly during these very uncertain times.

Mr Speaker, not only are we faced with issues relating to climate change that are impacting on global food production, however, now, as a result of the Russian invasion of the Ukraine, we will invariably be faced with increased fuel costs from the next arrival of the MV Helena, which will consequently have a knock on effect to all imports of food.

Mr Speaker, we have no way of knowing when or how this situation will end, and it is therefore pertinent that we prepare ourselves for worse to come. I therefore strongly believe that investing in improving our irrigation system at the ex-ADA fields is a wise move to make, hence my full support to this Motion. Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Member wish to speak to the Motion? Honourable Martin Henry?

The Hon. Martin Henry –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Just quickly to add that I have spent ten years of overseeing procurement for St Helena and know what the first-hand issues that Honourable Dr Corinda Essex was talking about. However, what is important for us as a Government to support the foundation structures. I see it also important for our business community to work more closely together to ensure consistency on top of these foundations. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Julie Thomas?

The Hon. Julie Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I think we're all shouting here, I just would like the public to know that we are having problems with our microphones at the moment so I do apologise if you cannot hear us clearly. I think it's important that it's great to hear all the Members speaking, but it's also encouraging as Chief Minister and also part of the ministerial team and the Legislative Council because our vision speaks very highly to supporting and the requirement for us to address food security and as our vision also speaks we need to work together, so as much as what Minister Henry has just said, the retailers will need to work with farmers, but farmers will need to work with each other and, indeed, communicate so that we can hopefully work together to put the infrastructure in place, but beyond that, farmers then need to work together in ensuring that we have crops all year around and that we're not trying to specialise in one area, but, indeed, can look at the bigger picture to ensure that we've got crops all year around, so I rise in support of this Motion as well. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Anyone else want to speak to the Motion? Honourable Christine Scipio, bringing the mic to you if you want to come round this way.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. As rightly said by the Chief Minister, food security is our vision, the Ministers' vision for the next four years and as the Minister of Environmental and Natural Resources and Planning, Mr Speaker, the Portfolio is happy to support this Motion to improve the irrigation system as an enabler for increased production on St Helena Government's arable estate.

As the Honourable Mover has indicated, some work has been undertaken by my Portfolio to look at how the irrigation system can be improved where initial discussions have taken place with the Tenants, Officers and Elected Members as well as the Water Authority provider. For the listening public, Mr Speaker, the area has been surveyed where a map has been produced for this particular area that we're talking about, by Connect St Helena, detailing the irrigation lines and where the current water sources are. However, Mr Speaker, progress and the speed with which a fully costed business case for an improved irrigation system can be undertaken will depend on further consultation with the agriculture producers as well as technical information, because, as we know, we are not all experts, so we will need some input for the technical information, as highlighted by Honourable Karl Thrower and also from Connect St Helena with the costing of how much it will cost for the water. So, as I stated, Mr Speaker, as the Minister of Environmental and Natural Resources and Planning, food security is high on my agenda as well as all Ministers. I support this Motion. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Does anyone else wish to speak? Does the Honourable Mover wish to respond to the debate?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Yes, please.

The Hon. Ronald Coleman –

I rise in support of the Motion, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Anyone else wish to speak before we go on to Honourable Mover? No? Honourable Mover, do you wish to respond to the debate?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would like to express my thanks to my colleagues for their support for this Motion which is one that I think is absolutely essential if we are going to try and achieve our aims of greater self sufficiency in terms of agricultural production on the island. As always, I guess the problem is going to be funding and, indeed, it is a pity that this element wasn't addressed in the project that is currently with the EDIP high level panel relating to agricultural improvement. However, we can but hope that further funding will be forthcoming and I look forward very much to seeing the business case and the fully funded proposal very shortly. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Dr Corinda Essex, the Mover of the Motion. So the Motion is that the St Helena Government expedites preparation of a project proposal to rectify the inadequacies of the current irrigation system at the ex-ADA fields in order to enable increased agricultural production.

Question on Motion, put and agreed to.

The Motion is carried.

The Speaker –

Next item of business, please?

7.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Mr Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn sine die.

The Speaker –

Anyone wishing to speak? Is there a seconder for the Adjournment Debate?

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –

Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Members can speak to the Adjournment Debate for up to, I think, is it ten minutes? I think it is ten minutes. Maybe I need to bring the mic round to everybody who might want to speak, I don't want to discourage you from speaking. Is there anyone who want to speak? Honourable Jeffrey Ellick? Maybe you can come up to this end of the table please, Councillor Ellick?

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the adjournment. As all are aware, there is a war in Ukraine. The Chief Minister gave a statement earlier during questions condemning the war. As an island, we might feel that we are far away and have no real influence on what happens, but in reality we have a voice and we are British and I feel we as an island need to play our part. A raft of sanctions have been issued by the UK which apparently have been extended to St Helena. The regulations impose financial, trade, aircraft, shipping and immigration sanctions for the purpose of persuading Russia to withdraw from Ukraine and cease activity which destabilises Ukraine or threatens the territorial integrity sovereignty or independence of Ukraine. These sanctions include prohibiting Russian aircraft within our air space, St Helena's air space, immigration measures which prohibit specific Russian and Belarussians entering UK and St Helena, trade sanctions ensuring certain goods are prohibited such as energy relating equipment, financial and new anti money laundering sanctions on designated Russians and Russian owned businesses, restrictions on investment in Russia and Russian held territory in Ukraine. We are currently in discussions with FCDO on how best to implement updated sanctions which prevents Russian vessels, including yachts, entering our port or visiting St Helena. It is my intention to present this proposal to my fellow ministers. Further sanctions may be brought forward to ensure we stand in unison with the UK and the

international community in our condemnation of Russia's totally unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine. I would like to thank those in St Helena who are supporting Ukraine at this time and urge others in the community and charities across St Helena to consider how they also may wish to support Ukraine at this time. Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Does anyone else wish to speak to the Adjournment Debate? Anyone? Dr Corinda Essex? You may need to come round to the mic.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, first let me apologise to the listening public for the chaos that we're in at the moment because we're all having to use the Speaker's mic because that's the only one that is operational, so please be patient with us and understand the reasons why things are not running smoothly. Mr Speaker, first I wish to bring to the attention of this House the continuing serious concern relating to the provision of medical treatment in Pretoria. From my firsthand experience of the care provided in South Africa, I was very impressed by the standards in place in Cape Town which I found to be far superior to those available in Pretoria. My disappointment in the latter is echoed by a high proportion of the patients sent there and by their carers, some of whom return quite traumatised. This cannot be ignored and the Cape Town alternative must be considered fully, not just in terms of cost, but also patient outcomes and experiences. In this context, I wish to thank the former Speaker of this Honourable House for taking forward a petition requesting that the treatment of medical referrals should revert to taking place in Cape Town rather than Pretoria and for also allowing me to input into its drafting.

Turning now to the needs of our ageing population, it is sad that shrinking budgets have resulted in little provision for home adaptations and none for essential structural repairs to the homes of the elderly which would enable them to remain in their own environment instead of having to move to alternative accommodation provided by St Helena Government or into a care home. Until a few years ago, there was limited Miscellaneous Minor Works funding available on an annual basis to assist elderly home owners on low incomes to meet the cost of essential repairs such as replacing rusted roofing or rotten window cases. Strict criteria were applied in the allocation of the funding which included independent assessment of the building's condition, proof of home ownership and of personal circumstances and input from the Health Authorities. The funding enabled the essential work to be undertaken and some recipients are, in fact, still occupying the homes repaired today. Mr Speaker, it is doubtful if such a use would meet the criteria for micro projects under the current Economic Development Investment Programme, but I urge St Helena Government to try to identify a source of funding to provide this type of assistance to the most needy elderly persons within our community. Not only would it improve their quality of life, but also potentially save St Helena Government for cost of bringing the individuals concerned into care.

St Helena will soon have a key opportunity to grow its working age population, this is really good news for St Helena as it is estimated that about a hundred and fifty Saints working on the Falklands or Ascension will not have their contracts renewed because of underlying health problems. This is bad news for the persons concerned, because St Helena is unlikely to be able to offer the same pay and conditions that they are getting now, but they can make a real difference if they remain here and there is no place like home. It is, however, vitally important that Careers Access St Helena, CASH, and the Sustainable Development team network proactively with the persons concerned to find out their skills, interests and aspirations. Many of them have been off island for a considerable time and have held responsible positions and have skills that will be of benefit to St Helena and of relevance. They have a lot of potential to offer and this must be recognised and nurtured, both for their benefit and for that of St Helena. Those returning must

be made to feel that their skills and experience are valued and that meaningful opportunities exist for them on St Helena. If this does not happen, it is likely that few will stay and an important opportunity for increasing our economically active population will have been lost making St Helena increasingly dependent on expatriate workers, which is not the way to go to achieve sustainable development. Mr Speaker, if St Helena is to have a sustainable future it must value and invest in its own people.

Also, as I mentioned earlier, every effort needs to be made to keep money and resources on island and to build St Helena's resilience. Import substitution should become an increasing priority and opportunities to facilitate this should be encouraged. As an example, an opportunity exists now as a brake shoe bonding unit is up for sale. This is something which could reduce the need for importing motor spares which are becoming increasingly difficult and expensive to source. Other potential opportunities exist in coffee production, secondary agriculture and fish products and the list goes on. We need to become more innovative in our thinking and less reliant on the outside world and strive constantly to take every opportunity we can to achieve improved self sufficiency. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Anyone else wish to speak to the Adjournment Debate? Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, recently a team of scientists from the Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International visited the island to kick-start a project to manage the pathogens potentially threatening St Helena's biodiversity which result in tree deaths, declining crop yields and increased insect population. It is anticipated, Mr Speaker, that this project will identify methods that can be developed to build capacity in diagnostics across all sectors, supporting growers, conservationists and foresters. This will prevent further deterioration of the endemic ecosystem and increase local food production thus reducing the necessity to import food. Improved plant protection will increase yields, lead to increased income for agriculture producers, more affordability prices for locally produced vegetables for consumers and providing sustainable food security for our community. Mr Speaker, I had the opportunity to participate in biological sampling to gather data with the Marine Section team who were extremely patient with explaining the process whilst dissecting the belly of a Grouper to investigate its sex, maturity and length. This session was rather enlightening and has raised, Mr Speaker, my awareness.

An insight to the farmers friends and natural enemies with the Pest Control Services Section has led to me learning new words, which, at times, I have difficulty with pronouncing, but yet the Team makes it seem so easy, which can be frustrating. No doubt the listeners are frowning as I have made reference to natural enemies. So, Mr Speaker, natural enemies are farmers' friends but enemies of a wide range of other insects. These natural enemies are means of biological control where one insect kill or help to control other pests. The biological control could be a predator who switch their diet to whatever is commonest or easiest to find and eat. They will kill or eat their prey or the parasites who have a narrow range of hosts which they live in or on. Parasites tend not to eat their host but weaken them. The parasitoids are parasitic wasps which feeds mainly on nectar, but, as I said, Mr Speaker, I do have a difficulty in pronouncing all this, which feeds mainly on nectar, but their young, which is the larvae, grows inside or outside of the host and eats it whilst alive eventually killing it. So, Mr Speaker, in a nutshell, since taking on this role as Minister of Environmental and Natural Resources and Planning, the learning curve is steep, but enlightenment is rewarding. I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Anyone else wish to speak to the Adjournment Debate? Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the Adjournment. Firstly Mr Speaker, I wish to thank those constituents who took the time to respond to the call for public views in relation to the proposed visit, and also those who have come out to meet with their District Representatives over the past few weeks; this is a particularly important part of the democratic process, and I would therefore encourage all members of our community to regularly engage with their District Representatives.

Mr Speaker, as a result of my own engagement with the residents of the St Pauls District, there would appear to be a common theme arising, namely the maintenance of non-adopted District and Community Roads, and also overgrowth or water run-off from Crown Land through which these roads run. This is a matter to which I have yet to find anyone within the St Helena Government administrative structure who is willing to take ownership of in a constructive, proactive manner, so, on behalf of my constituents, I will be raising future questions in the House regarding this issue.

Mr Speaker, I continue to be asked when a Legislative Programme will be produced, so I thank the Chief Minister for her written response. I look forward to working with the relevant Ministers to ensure that revised legislation is brought forward to this House in an expeditious manner.

I similarly look forward to seeing the Select Committees Order (which Ministers and Back Benchers have worked on collectively over the past few months) being enacted by His Excellency the Governor, in order that the two Scrutiny Committees may be set up without further delay.

Mr Speaker, the Health Department is clearly struggling, and this does not instil confidence within the resident community that the island should consider reducing quarantine periods. However, our own people who are overseas are currently making plans to visit this coming Christmas, and face uncertainty regarding how long they will have to spend with friends and family, against a back drop of restrictions being reduced elsewhere in the world. I therefore look forward to seeing more updates being provided to the public, regarding what is happening behind the scenes to address concerns.

Mr Speaker, I wish to commend your predecessor, Mr John Cranfield on launching his petition, which I sincerely hope will assist the efforts already being made by the St Helena Government to address public concerns. I again raise the point that we need a re-vitalised public awareness campaign, which both educates and informs the community regarding the risks that Covid-19 and other conditions actually present to the island.

Mr Speaker, it disappoints me to note the wide disparity between the different rates of remuneration that some receive against others working for the St Helena Government, and I question why the pay gap needs to be so wide. Again, this is something for further question at subsequent sessions.

Mr Speaker, I am pleased that action has started to be taken to address the Elected Member's Office facilities, so thank you to all who have been involved in addressing this issue. However, that noted, there is far more that still needs to be done in order to meet the recommendations laid out in the CPA Bench Marking Report, which I hope to bring to the House for endorsement at our next formal sitting.

In particular Mr Speaker, far more needs to be done in order to appropriately accommodate our Deputy Speaker in an "inclusive manner", and ad hoc arrangements made last minute.com are really unhelpful to all involved, as today's formal sitting has shown. Whilst we await further update on disabled access to the Council Chamber in the Castle, we likewise see little movement being made to address the recommendation that there should be improved facilities to give the LegCo increased stature and make it a distinct and separate institution from the government. I therefore hope that the Administration are also

working on this behind the scenes and that an update will be given to Elected Members before our next formal sitting of this Council.

In closing Mr Speaker, my thoughts go out to the people of Ukraine; I find the actions of Russia deplorable, and I pray that a peaceful resolution can be swiftly reached.

Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Robert Midwinter. Anyone else wish to speak to the Adjournment Debate? Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the Adjournment Debate. Mr Speaker, I'm only gonna say a few short words in my adjournment debate, so last week, as some Members might know, I lost something that was very close to my heart and that was my pet dog, Star, who we have had for some fifteen years and did move with us to the island some four years ago. I have grieved, but that grievance could have been a lot worse if not for the excellent services that our Veterinarian Department does up at ANRPD, so I would just like publicly to say thank you for all the support and services that ENRP under the Veterinarian Department has given us for the past four years, so thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Mark Brooks. Anyone else wish to speak? Honourable Ronald Coleman and then Honourable Rosemary Bargo.

The Hon. Ronald Coleman –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would first like to say that we had a very productive day today; I thought it was very good, although, in my opinion, in the last five months it's been frustrating. We've been helping our constituencies a lot as the Scrutiny Committees has not been set up yet. We are concerned, well, myself is concerned with the ministerial type of government as it's not working the way that I and many others thought it would work. The big issues when campaigning, Mr Speaker, was to improve communications, openness and transparency and a lot of us got elected on those promises. The public is begging to see what is happening for the last five months and there's very little to report. Mr Speaker, the same issues is coming up – affordable land for housing, affordable houses for those who cannot afford to build, drainage systems, the state of our roads, zero benefit systems, better assistance for farmers, better assistance for the fishermen, work for the unemployed, especially our young people. Councillor Dr Corinda Essex raised house improvements for the elderly, it is sad that there is no funding for such a thing when we saw today that Children and Adult Care Services gave up £30k of underspend. Sustainable Economic Development, finding extra revenue streams without targeting the same people, this is being very slow and there is more work that needs to be done in this. St Helena needs to progress more sustainable economic development. We've had another round of constituency meetings, the people were looking for Ministers, but we want to thank the Ministers for their briefs that they gave us and, of course, we used that to help people with their dilemmas and answer some of the questions they had. We would also like to thank the people for attending those district meetings to meet with their representatives.

I would also now like to thank the Health Minister for the work he's been doing with the Health Portfolio. Although we still have a long way to go, things are improving and making the island comfortable with a better service is much welcome, thus far, but there's still some problems in the meantime.

Mr Speaker, the war in Ukraine, our thoughts are with the people of Ukraine for the loss of life and especially displacement of our women and children and I hope the island can support whatever lines of support is set up. This war gives us great concern about what the war can mean for St Helena, whether it is the pricing for the shortage of goods, things like fuel and our food supplies.

Finally, Mr Speaker, I would just like to wish all the organisers of the St Helena Day Celebrations and the Queen's Jubilee Celebrations well in their endeavours and hope that we have some great days to celebrate. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Ronald Coleman. Honourable Rosemary Bargo?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the adjournment. Mr Speaker, it's been approximately five months since my appointment to this Legislative Council and it continues to be a fast track pace for me in this world of politics. Ministers have just recently released the Vision for St Helena which highlights the need for a sustainable environment that creates opportunities whilst inspiring social and economic progress for a better quality of life for all, a vision, I believe embraces my aspirations for everyone and our island as a whole. Mr Speaker, a hard road is ahead of us and as a backbencher one of the main duties is to review and ensure effective scrutiny of decisions and activities of the government. This is a vital component in our roles as backbenchers if we are to shape that change for the people of St Helena. Adopting the new ministerial system has proven quite a challenge thus far for all of us and as backbenchers trying to get our Select Committees Order through for approval has been tough, but I'm pleased to add that it is at its final stages to meet this approval. Thank you.

Whilst I recognise all critical areas that are affecting our people today, Healthcare is currently the hottest topic that is in need of stability and that which is crucial in helping to shape our Ministers overall vision for the island. Having said that, Mr Speaker, I commend our Minister Henry for his esteemed efforts in fighting the constant fires that our Health system is under today. Minister Henry, your ability to be upfront with the public on the issues we are facing is welcomed. Thank you.

My manifesto whilst campaigning I am pleased to say encompassed our Ministers vision and I remain committed to help shape this change for our people. I understand that we have a lot of challenges ahead of us with financial aid being one of the biggest challenges of all. I appreciate the tough decisions that our Ministers have to take in the upcoming months and I want to express to them that we as backbenchers are here to help you on this journey together. We can make fit for purpose policies and changes that will help shape the lives of our people for the better.

As the Councillor for Longwood, once again I want to thank my constituents for their continued support and whilst I would love to enable change for you on the island at the click of my finger, this will not come overnight and your patience is acknowledged and commended as we move forward in these challenging times. Also, I would like to express to the farmers, I, along with my colleagues, remain committed to ensuring that your sector becomes a main source of enabling food security for the island and we appreciate your continued cooperation and support in realising this.

Another vital industry that enables food security for the island is our fishing sector and the saga surrounding our fishing sector is impacting our local fishermen to operate at their full potential. This has been ongoing for approximately two years now and needs to be sorted as soon as we can.

Finally, I want to take time to express my utter disbelief and sadness with the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. My thoughts are with the Ukrainian people worldwide and to those who are currently on island here on St Helena. May there be peace soon and an end to this senseless war. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Rosemary Bargo. Anyone else wish to speak? Anyone? I know the Chief Minister will want to wind up, but anyone else wants to speak before then? Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I guess the Adjournment Debate is always the one that taxes my memory and, of course, trying to ensure that I address everything that people have said. I thank all the Members for their contributions to this Adjournment Debate and I'll try my utmost to ensure that I cover what has been said. So I will start in the order in which everyone spoke. To my Minister Jeffrey Ellick, I thank you for highlighting Ukraine and I know other Members have done the same. As I said in my questions on responses today, we as St Helena stand in support of the people of Ukraine and to hear Minister Ellick speak about things that St Helena could do more of to address this is, indeed, on the top of our list. As I mentioned in my response today, I have said that we have been speaking with the Governor and indeed the Government Officers and we will be looking wider to our Legislative Council as to what can be put into place and how we can gain support. With regards that, we also need to think about how we can ensure and do everything we can to try and keep ourselves as self sustaining as we possibly can as the world goes through these ever changing, changes that affect St Helena. It is encouraging, as I said, to hear the support for the sanctions posed on Russia and I look forward to working with you all as we go forward and that is to the ministerial team, but the Elected Members and also FCDO.

I then move on to Dr Corinda Essex and she mentioned the continuing concerns regarding the medical treatment in Pretoria. The contract, as Minister Henry has mentioned and we've been talking about in the public domain for some time, with MSO, is currently being reviewed and will be re-tendered shortly. From listening to Minister Henry today, as shortly as four weeks we're looking for that to be done. Concerns raised to date have been taken into account and it will be factored into the new specifications for this contract.

Honourable Dr Essex spoke about the support for the elderly persons with regards to home modifications. Again, the Health and Social Care Portfolio is able to offer support to home modifications to the vulnerable people. These generally take the form of the handrails, some specialist furniture and equipment and some internal modifications. The Portfolio is always looking for additional funding to support our vulnerable people. I note that other sources of funding needs to be looked at if we are to, indeed, gain the kind of progress that we need for our vulnerable people, but I'll speak about how we need to go about doing that as I conclude today.

The need also to work with Career Access St Helena and the Sustainable Development team, all Ministers work together on a daily basis, Career Access St Helena obviously comes under my umbrella as Minister for Education, Skills and Employment, Minister Brooks, Sustainable Development comes under his Portfolio and already we've been having discussions with different portfolios and even people outside of government and we do this when it's cross-cutting with two if not three Ministers attending these meetings, because we see and understand the need to be able to address this together.

Economic opportunities, I see that, as Dr Essex has mentioned, with people having to return home albeit under forced circumstances because of health and that is, as you rightly said, a concern, because it will put more strain on our medical services possibly, depending on the health, but we can also look at the benefits and the opportunities that they can bring with the new skill sets, or, indeed, more skill sets to fill the gaps that we have to ensure that we reach our economic potential. Opportunities aren't always in St Helena Government, so I encourage people to also consider what it is that they can offer as services to St Helena that is probably in short demand or isn't even present on St Helena.

The Minister Scipio spoke about all the progress and the big learning curve that she's had within her Portfolio. It is great to hear the progress being made and all of this work is significantly supporting our aspirations as Elected Members and I have to say most of what has been heard in this Adjournment Debate today is covered within our Vision and I thank our Honourable Rosemary Bargo for actually stating that very clearly, along with Minister Scipio. Our Vision has been thought through, it has incorporated many people, our Elected Members, our Government Officers and our counterparts within Government, our Portfolio Directors and teams, but we've also included the youth of today in our schools and, indeed, the Chamber of Commerce and the Private Sector, so I'm hoping that our Vision will touch base with most things that people have put forward to us in our short reign of five months. So I do thank Minister Scipio for that, I think not only you with names and the names of different species, it's also for us in the five months I think it needs to be recognised that a lot of us come from private sector arenas, so even understanding all the abbreviations used within Government is something that takes some time to get used to and all the processes, but we are getting there and I have to say I feel confident that we are getting there quicker than I possibly thought we would do, so I thank everybody for their patience with regards to that. Honourable Midwinter spoke about quarantine and I can tell you we're very keen to get a road map which will help the island to navigate its way safely to a reduced quarantine period that is being developed. This is being done with support of the Health Services Agency and we will continue to work very closely with them and obviously they're based in the UK. I also say thank you to Honourable Midwinter for addressing the community and the need for engagement with them, I've said on numerous occasions that two-way communication is important, whether that is from us providing information or, indeed, the community providing information back to us.

The Legislative Programme, I've now given a written response to that and that will be in the public domain. Scrutiny and Select Committees Order is something that this ministerial team is looking forward to, we want to be an accountable and responsible Government so we embrace the need for scrutiny, but obviously things take time and as Honourable Rosemary Bargo stated, we are now at the final stages and now that I've had some feedback from all of the Legislative Council members, Honourable Bargo is correct that it's now at its final stages and I'd like to hope that that can be tabled in the upcoming formal LegCo.

Honourable Midwinter also talked about the pay gaps, again, that is a written response that I've received and I look forward to how any ideas that the wider Council can come up with as to how we can address these gaps, because I know that it is something that is a concern, especially when we're talking about valuing and investing in our own people.

And then, obviously, we spoke about the need for a permanent residence for us as a Legislative Council. It is frustrating, I have to admit to that, it is an ongoing problem and we need to be segregated, especially those with the backbenchers, so that we are more accessible to the community, but I don't think we can say we haven't been fighting and shouting about that and although today it's been more bearable in this room I guess than some of the other rooms we've worked out of, but we're down to one microphone now, so I'm not entirely sure, you know, going forward it is always awkward, but I thank, I have to thank the Clerk of Council Office though, because they have been running around as well trying to accommodate us and to do all they can to support us in these taxing conditions, but I have to address my Deputy Speaker and say you have our support, we're really keen to get a premises that ensures that you can join us for all discussions and that it's not that you're in one room and we're somewhere else, we really want you to feel part of this team and inclusivity for us is very very important, so I would like to address that as well.

Minister Brooks, you have been Honourable Bargo when we did the International Women's Day, I don't know how many people have heard that recording that we did and it ended, it is good, because we are human, when we come into these roles we don't stop being human and we are vulnerable as well, so to

hear you speak about losing your dog and your very dear family member, I do send out sincere condolences for that, but it is wonderful to know that you've got a team up at the Veterinary Services, which I use very regularly myself, who's doing an excellent job, so thank you to them, but I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank the wider Government Departments and Directorates for the work that they do because although sometimes we can improve we also need to acknowledge the workload and the work that they put in to ensure that we have information on the table that makes our jobs easier as well.

Honourable Ronald Coleman spoke about the ministerial government and I have to say, I talked about the lack of communication, it's interesting to hear this, because the Ministers, I think, get different feedback, I have to be honest. We have been congratulated for the amount of information we put out in the public domain. Out of Executive Council, we go very swiftly to the radio stations when it allows to give updates. Minister Henry, you've been congratulated today and I have not made any secret of that, what you've done with the Health and bringing it out there to the community is, indeed, commendable. Our people, as I've known even before coming into this role, want honesty, they want us to be open and transparent and not because the doors of Executive Council are closed means that we are not gonna be an open and transparent Government, it's just that if we want to practice collective responsibility we have a, it is important for us to have those open discussions and come out to the community and stand together strong as a team, because division will not do this Council or this island any benefit and we need to recognise that, but whenever a decision has been taken, and it can be shared, I give you the assurance that we will continue to do that.

Again, there was talks about the recent constituency meetings and the fact that Ministers weren't in attendance. This shouldn't come as a shock because this was well discussed in our inaugural meetings back in November/December and we advised the community then, and I know we've done it on radio also, that due to our workload and the amount of pressure and important information that needs to be done and decisions taken, we can, it's difficult at times to come out on such meetings like this, but you must entrust or give information to your backbenchers or your district representatives because they are your voices and we meet on a regular basis so they feed that information back to us, so they must have your support as much as we need their support to ensure that this entire ministerial government works. Yes, there are a lot of crossroads still out there for us, but I think we've got a strong team here and we will be able to meet any challenges if we do it together. So my, this has gone blank on me, so at the moment, I just think it's important for me to say that most of the feedback that's come through this Adjournment Debate I think is great, but I also think that we're on the right road because it is very much in, it's conducive to what we've put in our Vision and for that I say thank you to everybody, not just people sitting in this room, but the community, because I think we've obviously acknowledged and taken onboard what you've said, the hard work now begins because the Strategic Plan is put in place to show and demonstrate to people that the road map is coming and this Government will do all they can to enable development, but the driving force will need to come from the entire population of St Helena and beyond, so I say thank you to everybody for today and I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Chief Minister for winding up and what do I say after that? No, nothing really, Mr Speaker isn't supposed to have any kind of thoughts like that, but I have to say, you know, what a pleasure it has been, sort of, here today. I said to the Chief Minister only recently that the key to everything is working together and I saw some working together today, even if it was only trying to push the mics around to everybody, because we wound up with only one mic working, it just happened to be the Speaker's mic, but there is problems, we are trying to get a building that's suitable for everybody to be able to attend, I'm referring now, of course, to the persons with disabilities, that is trying to be managed. We came here

today, supposedly this was going to be the best room for us to be able to do that and it is, you know, we can't get the Court House, we certainly won't be able to get it after about September this year, because we've been, sort of, kicked out of there, if that's the way to put it, so it's only this place here, unless there's a building outside or the Council Chamber. The Council Chamber needs to be made so that, and I'm not going, I know our Deputy Speaker is disabled and she wouldn't want me to say that everything should be blamed on her because she is disabled, but she's just one of the disabled people who can't get into the Council Chamber and so it's all about making the Council Chamber a place where all people with disabilities is able go and meet and listen to their parliament, because the parliament is very, very important. The CPA is very, very important, we benefit hugely from the CPA, so I'd like our members to keep the CPA in mind as being an important organisation that we need to follow and we are doing that, we've got three members overseas now, you know, to the Westminster Seminar and Shanice is there as well, that Office is very important also where Shanice works and Anita and Connie, it is very, very important, I didn't realise just how much work is done there, but an awful lot of work is actually done there. I see Dax Richards is up there smiling, because he knows I'm not even supposed to be saying this, but this Speaker likes to talk, so perhaps that is the problem, but, you know, things have been going well, some have, and it's only been five months really that this new government has been a government, just five months when you think about it. The backbenchers can't show their worth until Scrutiny Committees, Select Committees, Question Time, a revision of the Standing Orders is all done. When they are able to do all that, question the Ministers and so on then they will be able to show their worth, but the Ministers have shown their worth and, you know, I think quite a lot has been done. Maybe I shouldn't say anymore than that, I guess, difficult to do that, but today, of course, was an experience, wasn't it, and it all shows that we all have some teething problems, we will have these things for I think some time to come yet, we will, but the calibre of people that's around the table will be able to do all of that. So, anyway, that's from me.

I now put the question that this Council be adjourned until the end of March.

Question that Council be adjourned until the end of March, put and agreed to.

The Speaker –

The Ayes have it. I hereby declare this meeting sine die.

Honourable Speaker

Date