

MANX UTILITIES AUTHORITY

1.11. Annual flooding in Onchan – Plans to address

The Hon. Member for Onchan (Mr Callister) to ask the Chairman of the Manx Utilities Authority:

What plans the Authority has to address flooding occurring annually and affecting a number of properties in Laurel Avenue, Ashley Park, Kaighin's Lane and Hackett Close, Onchan?

The Speaker: Question 11, and I call on the Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Callister.

Mr Callister: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I would like to ask the Chairman of the Manx Utilities Authority what plans the Authority has to address flooding occurring annually and affecting a number of properties at Laurel Avenue, Ashley Park, Kaighin's Lane and Hackett Close in Onchan?

The Speaker: Chairman of the Manx Utilities Authority, Hon. Member for Ramsey, Dr Allinson, to reply.

The Chairman of the Manx Utilities Authority (Dr Allinson): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I would like to thank the Hon. Member for Onchan for raising this issue which I understand has affected families in his constituency for several years.

Manx Utilities has the supervisory duties with respect to overall flood risk management on the Isle of Man. The flooding periodically experienced in the Laurel Avenue, Ashley Park, Kaighin's Lane and Hackett Close areas has been extensively investigated by Manx Utilities in order that the flooding mechanisms could be understood and cost-effective solutions identified.

CCTV camera surveys and dye tracing of the surface water and highway drainage systems have taken place, together with hydraulic computer modelling of the foul sewage system to find the cause of the problem.

It has been shown that a combination of undersized highway drainage systems and overland surface water run-off from the steep hardstanding areas is affecting the rear gardens of a number of properties in Ashley Park and Hackett Close. During some periods of heavy rainfall these overland flows are also entering the foul sewers, causing them to overload in the downstream catchment.

Manx Utilities have recently met with the Department of Infrastructure and Onchan Commissioners where it was agreed that a number of small-scale improvements would be implemented across the areas to reduce overland surface water run-off and divert the floodwater into existing drainage systems in order to protect the properties. These elements of work are to be carried out jointly between the various agencies.

Additionally, Manx Utilities have proposed the design to reduce the impact of flooding at the bottom of Laurel Avenue, which the Department of Infrastructure is currently reviewing. The Department of Infrastructure has agreed to lead the construction of those which includes new soakaways located in Ashley Hill School's playing field, and may require the appointment of a specialist off-Island contractor to carry out the necessary directional drilling.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Callister.

Mr Callister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Chairman for his detailed response.

I feel it is very important that any work to improve this area starts as quickly as possible, therefore could I ask the Chairman to give a timeframe as to when the work will begin?

The Speaker: Chairman to reply.

The Chairman: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

As I have stated, the work is being done in co-operation with the Department of the Environment, who have said that they will do the necessary work by April 2017.

The Speaker: I call on the Hon. Member for Onchan, Ms Edge.

Ms Edge: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Can I just ask the Chairman of the MUA why he feels that it might be possible to bring engineers in from the UK for something with this type of engineering? I am quite surprised at that.

The Speaker: Chairman to reply.

The Chairman: Thank you for the question.

This is a very technical answer to quite a difficult problem which has got many different facets to it. One of the proposals from Manx Utilities is to drill under people's gardens, so horizontal drilling, called directional drilling. There is not the capacity to do that by on-Island firms at the moment, because it is a very technical procedure requiring specialist equipment which may be brought over. This is one of the options being looked at by the Department of Infrastructure.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Callister.

Mr Callister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Chairman once again for his detailed response here this morning.

I am disappointed that April 2017 is the given start date, given the fact that these residents will have to endure another winter. I can only hope that we do not get the rainfall that we have suffered over the last few years.

Could I therefore ask the Chairman to give reassurance here today that the Manx Utilities Authority will take the lead and work with Onchan Commissioners and the DOI to solve these problems as a matter of urgency?

The Speaker: Chairman to reply.

The Chairman: Certainly.

The Speaker: Hon. Member, Mr Thomas.

Mr Thomas: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Can the Chair confirm to this House and the general public that this work will be prioritised rationally, according to the constraints that are budgetary, and according to the identified need for these things; and it does not actually benefit other particular residents to make sure that they are subject to particular Questions in this House; and that there is a rational system in place for identifying and then carrying out this work?

The Speaker: Chairman to reply.

The Chairman: I can.

Where flooding instances occur within drainage catchment areas, standard industry practice is to initially carry out localised alterations to the drainage network, of course, rather than implement large-scale, high-cost projects.