



**HOUSE OF KEYS  
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**RECORTYS OIKOIL  
Y CHIARE AS FEED**

**PROCEEDINGS  
DAALTYN  
(HANSARD)**

**Douglas, Tuesday, 22nd February 2005**

**Present:**

The Speaker (The Hon. J A Brown) (Castletown); Mr D M Anderson (Glenfaba);  
 Hon. A R Bell and Mrs A V Craine (Ramsey); Mr W E Teare (Ayre); Mr J D Q Cannan (Michael); Mrs H Hannan (Peel);  
 Hon. S C Rodan (Garff); Mr P Karran, Hon. R K Corkill and Mr A J Earnshaw (Onchan); Mr G M Quayle (Middle);  
 Mr J R Houghton (Douglas North); Hon. D C Cretney and Mr A C Duggan (Douglas South);  
 Hon. R P Braidwood and Mrs B J Cannell (Douglas East); Hon. A F Downie and Hon. J P Shimmin (Douglas West);  
 Capt. A C Douglas (Malew and Santon); Hon. J Rimington, Mr Q B Gill and Mr P A Gawne (Rushen);  
 with Mr M Cornwell-Kelly, Clerk of Tynwald.

**Business transacted**

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*The House adjourned at 10.55 a.m.*

## House of Keys

*The House met at 10.00 a.m.*

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

### PRAYERS

*The Speaker of the House of Keys*

### LEAVE OF ABSENCE GRANTED

**The Speaker:** Hon. Members, I have granted leave of absence for this morning's proceedings, or part of this morning's proceedings, to the Hon. Member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson, the Hon. Member for Garff, Mr Rodan, and the Hon. Member for Malew and Santon, Capt. Douglas.

### Procedural

**The Speaker:** As a consequence of granting leave to the Hon. Member for Garff, Mr Rodan, I have agreed that Question 7 can be taken after Question 1.

Also, Hon. Members should be aware that Question 2 has been redirected to the Minister for Trade and Industry for response.

## Questions for Oral Answer

### CHIEF MINISTER

#### 'Marginalisation' of MHKs Government policy

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

*Is it your Government's policy or practice to attempt to marginalise the role of Members of the House of Keys to represent the interests of their constituents?*

**The Speaker:** Hon. Members, Questions for Oral Answer. Question 1, Hon. Member for Rushen, Mr Gill.

**Mr Gill:** Vainstyr Loayreyder, ta mee shirrey kied yn eysht y chur ta fo my ennym.

**The Speaker:** I call on the Hon. Member for Ramsey, Mr Bell, Minister for the Treasury, to answer on behalf of the Chief Minister.

**The Minister for the Treasury (Mr Bell):** Mr Speaker, the Answer to the Hon. Member's Question is 'no'.

### HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY

#### General Practitioners' incentive scheme Reason for and details

1.7. The Hon. Member for Douglas North (Mr Houghton) to ask the Minister for Health and Social Security:

*(1) Is your Department promoting a generic prescribing incentive scheme to General Practitioners, if so, why; and*

*(2) what is the financial incentive and how long has this scheme been in operation?*

**The Speaker:** Question 7, Hon. Member for Garff, Mr Rodan.

**Mr Houghton:** Mr Speaker, sir.

**The Speaker:** Sorry, Hon. Member, I have moved on. Oh, sorry. My mind has gone. Sorry, Hon. Member.

**Mr Houghton:** I forgive you, sir.

**The Speaker:** *(Laughter)* I was focused on the Hon. Member for Garff.

Hon. Member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton, to ask the Question standing in his name at Question 7.

**Mr Houghton:** I am very grateful to you, sir. I beg leave to ask the Question standing in my name, sir.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Garff, Mr Rodan, Minister for Health and Social Security to reply.

**The Minister for Health and Social Security (Mr Rodan):** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I can confirm that the Department has, for a number of years, been operating a Generic Prescribing Incentive Scheme. Such schemes are widely used throughout the National Health Service and are designed to encourage prescribing by GPs of drugs and medicines by their chemical or pharmaceutical name, rather than by a brand name.

This has a number of advantages and, in particular, is considered good medical practice, in that all healthcare professionals recognise the chemical or generic name, thus reducing the risk of inappropriate treatment. In addition, generic drugs tend to be less costly than branded products and this has a financial benefit in terms of the overall drugs bill.

Turning to the second part of the Hon. Member's Question, individual GPs who attain a generic prescribing rate of up to 70 per cent over a 12-month period are allocated a sum of £2,250, which is available on a group practice basis, for investment in practice developments related to patient care. The Generic Prescribing Scheme has been in place since January 2000.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, I would wish to confirm that my Department remains supportive of the principle of the

Prescribing Incentive Scheme, although we will continue to monitor its effectiveness, in terms of the objectives behind it.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I am pleased to call on the Hon. Member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

**Mr Houghton:** I thank you, Mr Speaker.

Can the Hon. Minister put his whole weight behind this policy, that was orchestrated before he became Minister of the Department, insofar as promoting a financial incentive scheme to general practitioners, in order to prescribe generic drugs at profit to the GP, rather than the effect it must have, and should have, on the patient, for which it is prescribed, sir?

**The Speaker:** Minister for Health and Social Security to reply.

**The Minister:** Yes, Mr Speaker, I can confirm that the principle of giving incentives for generic prescribing will continue. The rate that is being attained now, generally, is more than 70 per cent and it is somewhat debatable whether the Incentive Scheme should continue in its present form, which is why we are looking at recasting the scheme, so that the incentive is given to the practice, for expenditure on items that will ultimately be to the benefit of patients of that practice, but incentives to the practice itself, rather than, at the moment, to individual GPs.

## TREASURY

### Manx Electricity Authority and subsidiaries Memoranda and Articles of Association

1.2. The Hon. Member for Michael (Mr Cannan) to ask the Minister for the Treasury:

*Will you provide to Members of Tynwald, on request, the following documents –*

*(a) Memorandum of Association; and*

*(b) Articles of Association*

*of all subsidiary companies established by the Manx Electricity Authority?*

**The Speaker:** Question 2 on the Order Paper, as it is numbered. I call on the Hon. Member for Michael, Mr Cannan.

**Mr Cannan:** Mr Speaker, I ask the Question standing in my name, sir.

**The Speaker:** I call on the Hon. Member for Douglas West, Mr Downie, Minister for Trade and Industry to reply.

**The Minister for Trade and Industry (Mr Downie):** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

To the best of my knowledge, the Manx Electricity Authority has, to date, formed four subsidiary companies. These are PGT Power Ltd, The Manx Cable Company Ltd,

Skyward Ltd and Skyward Telecommunications Ltd.

As Hon. Members will be aware, the documents being requested are already a matter of public record. Those in respect of the Isle of Man registered companies are available from the Companies Registry of the Financial Supervision Commission and in the case of Skyward Telecommunications Ltd, a United Kingdom company, from the Companies House in Cardiff. I know that at least one Hon. Member of this House already has a copy of these documents.

However, in order to assist all Hon. Members, copies of the relevant documentation can be made available and I will be pleased to make arrangements to provide them to any Member of Tynwald who so requests, via the Tynwald Office.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Michael, Mr Cannan.

**Mr Cannan:** I thank the Minister for his reply and request that he supplies copies.

Will the Minister tell this House why he is answering this Question? Is it because the Minister has, since his appointment, the overall responsibility for the good management and good governance of the MEA and will the Minister publicly acknowledge that this is so?

**The Speaker:** Minister for Trade and Industry to reply.

**The Minister:** I can confirm that I do *not* have overall responsibility for the governance and good management of the MEA. I was asked to take this particular Question, because one of the companies referred to in my Answer has been set up since the introduction of the Gas and Electricity Act and, therefore, the setting up of that company would require authority from the Department of Trade and Industry.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

**Mr Karran:** Vainstyr Loayreyder, a supplementary.

Could the Shirveishagh tell us, with the UK company, whether this company has actually been activated? Have any of the records changed since some Hon. Members have looked at these companies in the last month or so? Has anybody looked from his Department recently, to see if there have been any changes with these companies?

**The Speaker:** Minister for Trade and Industry to reply.

**The Minister:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

At this stage I have only very limited information from the Authority about Skyward Ltd and Skyward Telecommunications Ltd.

Having said that, it should be borne in mind that neither company is currently operational and that a dialogue is continuing between the Department and the Authority about these two companies.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Michael, Mr Cannan.

**Mr Cannan:** Perhaps, now that the Minister acknowledges that Skyward companies were formed, when did the Minister first become aware that the MEA had formed these subsidiary companies and when did he first read the Memoranda of Association and Articles of Association relating to these companies?

**The Speaker:** Minister for Trade and Industry to reply.

**The Minister:** Yes. The first I heard about the formation of these companies was following the allegations that the Hon. Member made on Manx Radio about the extensive borrowing and other implications. I started to launch an investigation within the DTI, to find out if any such companies had been incorporated and whether there were any letters or information in my Department requesting permission to do so.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Michael, Mr Cannan.

**Mr Cannan:** Then, will the Minister explain: was he present at the Council of Ministers' meeting last July, when the MEA directors gave a presentation entitled '2010'? If you were present, you would have been aware of the formation of the Skyward companies, because that was the basis of the presentation. Did you enquire about the companies and how they were being financed?

**The Speaker:** Minister for Trade and Industry to reply.

**The Minister:** To the best of my knowledge, I was present at the presentation, (**Mr Cannan:** Ah.) but I understand it has always been a requirement, under the 2003 Gas and Electricity Act, for the Manx Electricity Authority to seek permission to set up one of these companies and, to my knowledge, to date, we have either had no request for permission to set up a company, nor, indeed...

I can confirm that no authority from the DTI has been granted for the setting up of this company.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Michael, Mr Cannan.

**Mr Cannan:** But, Minister, you just said that you first became aware of the Skyward companies, when it was disclosed, on Manx Radio in November, about the excessive borrowing. Yet now you say you were present at the presentation last July, when the 'Vision 2010' – which was all about Skyward operations – and yet you did not, obviously... did you pay attention to what was going on and did you ask questions concerning that presentation?

**The Speaker:** Minister for Trade and Industry, Mr Downie, to reply.

**The Minister:** Yes, thank you. Well, let us be quite clear about this, Hon. Members. I was present at the presentation –

**Mr Cannan:** Good, thank you.

**Mr Downie:** 'Skyward' is a name given to the project and not the company and, if the Hon. Member can show me the business plan and the supporting information relating to the Skyward project, and the reference in there to where permission needs to be granted by the DTI before setting up that company, I would be very pleased to see it.

**Mr Cannan:** A final supplementary, please, Mr Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Michael, Mr Cannan.

**Mr Cannan:** My final supplementary.

Thank you, Minister, for acknowledging you were at the presentation. Did you not ask any questions of the MEA directors, as to how all this was being financed and the subsidiary companies which were in the documentation?

**The Speaker:** Minister for Trade and Industry to reply.

**The Minister:** Yes, the presentation related to the progress that was being made and it was quite clear that, following that meeting, the MEA was instructed to go away and work up a proper business case and a business plan that would be available, then, for all Members of Tynwald to see.

Following acceptance by Tynwald Members – that this was the way we wanted to see this development progressing – then I would have, naturally, assumed that the MEA board would have requested permission to set up the company, not do it the other way round.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

**Mr Karran:** Vainstyr Loayreyder, would the Shirveishagh not agree... maybe it is time that the Council of Ministers looked at doing some sort of procedure audit, as far as any way that anybody proposing to bring subsidiary companies, which are put in the name of the people, that there needs to be better safeguards, as far as the issue is concerned. Would the Shirveishagh revisit these companies – especially this UK company – to make sure that there has not been any more activity, as far as that UK company is concerned?

Finally, Vainstyr Loayreyder, would the Shirveishagh not agree that there is a facility for all Hon. Members to go up and get full company files, whenever they want, which is a wonderful service that the General Registry provides to me, in particular, on a regular basis?

**The Speaker:** Minister for Trade and Industry to reply.

**The Minister:** I would, first of all, agree with the comments made by the Hon. Member for Onchan that all of this information is available to any Member of the public –

**Mr Earnshaw:** Online.

**The Minister:** – actually online, as the Member has said.

At the present time, we are in the middle of the investigation that is being carried out by PKF and one of the areas that they have been tasked to look into, is the setting up of these subsidiary companies. When we have more information available, I am sure that the Treasury Minister and myself will be only too pleased to relate their findings to Tynwald at the appropriate time.

## HOME AFFAIRS

### Emergency services Role of Lieutenant Governor

1.3. The Hon. Member for Rushen (Mr Gill) to ask the Minister for Home Affairs:

(1) *What command role does the Lieutenant Governor*

have over normal (i.e. outwith declared national emergencies etc) police activities;

(2) does the Chief Constable periodically brief the Lieutenant Governor on normal police matters, if so, why and on what authority;

(3) were you as Minister for the Department of Home Affairs aware of this practice, if so, did you authorise or accede to such a practice and are you aware of the issues disclosed; and

(4) if such a practice does take place, do other Chief Officers of the Emergency Services have a similar practice, and, if not, why not?

**The Speaker:** Question 3, Hon. Members. I call on the Hon. Member for Rushen, Mr Gill.

**Mr Gill:** Ta mee shirrey kied yn eysht y chur ta fo my ennym.

**The Speaker:** I call on the Hon. Member for Douglas East, Mr Braidwood, Minister for Home Affairs, to reply.

**The Minister for Home Affairs (Mr Braidwood):** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Lieutenant-Governor has no role in normal police activities. The command and disposition of the Isle of Man Constabulary is solely the responsibility of the Chief Constable, who derives his powers from the Police Act 1993.

Moving on to part (2) of the Question, Mr Speaker, the Chief Constable usually briefs His Excellency on a monthly basis on policing matters. The briefing usually consists of a summary of Police performance, crime trends, major incidents and any arrests for notable offences.

From time to time, His Excellency and the Chief Constable would discuss matters of neutral interest, such as the arrangements for royal visits and arrangements for Tynwald Day. There is no legal authority for this liaison, it is more a question of professional courtesy, a practice that has taken place for many years.

In answer to the penultimate question, Mr Speaker, I was aware that the Chief Constable meets with His Excellency. I did not see it as a meeting, which I had either to authorise or to accede to, as my understanding was that it was a meeting to discuss operational matters, for which, as I have stated previously, the Chief Constable has responsibility and which I cannot influence or interfere with.

Finally, Mr Speaker, I do not, nor should I, have to approve all meetings that the Chief Constable, or any other senior official within my Department, attends, where operational matters are being discussed. As far as I am aware, no other such meeting takes place on a regular basis with other heads of respective emergency services. That said, I cannot speak for those emergency services outside my Department.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Rushen, Mr Gill.

**Mr Gill:** Thank you and I thank the Minister for that Answer.

Could the Minister reconcile the Answer to part (1) and that of part (2), where he says that His Excellency has no command role in the Police in normal activities and yet he receives a briefing.

I can understand when he talks about ‘mutual interests’ about royal visits or Tynwald Day et cetera, where His Excellency has an active role, but how can he reconcile having no role and then being privy to operational information about matters of which he has no influence or authority in?

**The Speaker:** Minister for Home Affairs to reply.

**The Minister:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

As I said, in answer to part (1), the Governor cannot interfere in Police activities. In actual fact, the Chief Constable, in informing His Excellency, is a precedent which has been set over many years. In actual fact, the former Chief Constable introduced the present Chief Constable to the Governor and this has been something which has been carried on for a great number of years, Mr Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

**Mr Karran:** Vainstyr Loayreyder, would the Shirveishagh not agree that this is a relic from the days when the British Governor was the feudal lord of the Isle of Man? Would he also not agree that it does undermine the principle that the Governor should be non-political and have no influence at all on such issues?

**The Speaker:** Minister for Home Affairs to reply.

**The Minister:** Mr Speaker, I do not think it goes back to feudal times. I just believe it is a briefing, which the Chief Constable keeps the Lieutenant-Governor up to date in what is happening on the Island.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Rushen, Mr Gill.

**Mr Gill:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Could the Minister cast his mind back to the unfortunate, and probably inaccurate – certainly, in parts – report that was in *The Times* a few months ago. This practice was referred to and a meeting was described between the Chief Constable and the Lieutenant-Governor, in which the Lieutenant-Governor was purported to have given instructions to the Chief Constable. Could he tell us: is there any accuracy in that particular report and is that a scenario, where the Chief Constable would take instructions from the Lieutenant-Governor under any circumstances?

**The Speaker:** Minister for Home Affairs to reply.

**The Minister:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I cannot comment on the current investigation. However, I can say, quite categorically, that the allegations made in the press article were totally inaccurate and I can state that, to my knowledge, no such meeting occurred and, therefore, no such discussion took place.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Peel, Mrs Hannan.

**Mrs Hannan:** Thank you, Vainstyr Loayreyder.

If the Minister is saying that no such meeting took place and that the Chief Constable meets the Governor on a monthly basis, how can he say that no discussion took place, when he is not privy to that discussion?

I would also ask, why does the Chief Constable need to brief the Governor and why does the Governor need to be briefed by the Chief Constable, any more than anybody else needs to be briefed by the Chief Constable, if they have no say in operation?

**Mr Houghton:** Especially the Minister.

**The Speaker:** Minister for Home Affairs to reply.

**The Minister:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

All I can go on is the information that has been given to myself. As I said, to my knowledge, no meeting took place to discuss any of the allegations which had been made and the press have written an article which was totally inaccurate.

All I can say is that the Chief Constable informs His Excellency on what is happening during each month, in keeping him up to date on what is happening on crime figures, whatsoever. As I have said, this has been a precedent, which has been set over a number of years with former Chief Constables.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Ramsey, Mrs Craine.

**Mrs Craine:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Would the Minister undertake that, with the appointment, or impending appointment of a new Lieutenant-Governor... Would he care to suggest to the Chief Constable that, with the exception of procedural or operational matters, he may wish to desist from briefing the new Lieutenant-Governor?

**Mrs Hannan:** Hear, hear.

**The Speaker:** Minister for Home Affairs to reply.

**The Minister:** Mr Speaker, I am quite happy to discuss that with the Chief Constable.

**The Speaker:** Question 4. Hon. Member for Rushen, Mr Gill – Question 3, still.

**Mr Gill:** If the Minister is happy to discuss that with the Chief Constable, will he give an undertaking that he will report back the outcome of that discussion to Members?

**The Speaker:** Minister of Home Affairs to reply.

**The Minister:** Yes, sir.

#### **Purchase of police station site at Douglas ‘Bus Station’ Ensuring effectiveness of location**

1.4. The Hon. Member for Onchan (Mr Karran) to ask the Minister for Home Affairs:

*Before the purchase of the site for the Police Station situated at the Bus Station, will a review take place to –*

*(a) make sure that it will be the most efficient and effective accommodation;*

*(b) examine the issues of the location of the custody suite; and*

*(c) whether there should be a joint headquarters based at the Fire Station*

*in spite of the fact that £1,007,000 was voted in February 2001 for the customisation and fitting out at the site of 6 Lord Street, Douglas for the development of a fully operational Police Station?*

**The Speaker:** Hon. Members, we move on to Question 4. Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

**Mr Karran:** Vainstyr Loayreyder, I beg to ask the Question standing in my name.

**The Speaker:** I call on the Hon. Member for Douglas East, Mr Braidwood, Minister for Home Affairs, to reply.

**The Minister for Home Affairs (Mr Braidwood):** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I thank the Member for Onchan for his Question and, if I may, I would like to explain to the House the history and rationale for having a police station located opposite the ‘Bus Station’ in lower Douglas.

Members may recall that the Isle of Man Constabulary moved to its present headquarters on Glencrutchery Road, Douglas, in 1979. The vacant premises in Church Street, Douglas, were retained as a Douglas town centre police station, due mainly to the presence of what was then the main courts. When the courts were relocated to the new Courts of Justice building, the property in Church Street was disposed of.

Following the disposal of the property in Church Street, in order to maintain a police presence in lower Douglas, temporary premises were opened at the Lord Street Bus Station and then to a shop unit at the Villa Marina Arcade.

Following an endorsement by my Department to provide a permanent police station in lower Douglas and to relieve the issue of overcrowding at the Police Headquarters, a permanent solution to having a police station in lower Douglas was sought.

After considerable extensive research of what were then current and proposed developments in lower Douglas, a site, which would meet the needs of the constabulary, was identified on the old bonded warehouse site, 6 Lord Street, opposite the old Douglas bus station.

Working with the developer, the Department invested £1,007,000 in fitting out the premises, to provide an operational police station and entered into a 21-year lease, with an option to buy.

Mr Speaker, the Constabulary and the Department are satisfied that the police station, located opposite the bus station, meets the long-term need for having a police station located in lower Douglas. Accordingly, subject to the necessary approvals, the Department intends to exercise the option to acquire the premises, thus saving on the annual lease payments.

Mr Speaker, in relation to the Question posed in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, I believe the premises at lower Douglas do meet the operational needs of a police station, located close to the town centre. It is, therefore, effective in that regard.

In terms of efficiency, I did meet with the Member for Onchan, together with my Chief Executive, and, amongst other things, discussed the acquisition of lower Douglas police station. During the meeting the Hon. Member

suggested that a joint police headquarters and fire brigade headquarters would be the most efficient way forward. To that extent, I do agree. However, it must be remembered that the premises located in lower Douglas is an operational police station and not a police headquarters.

Mr Speaker, if I may reiterate, the policy of the Constabulary and the Department is to have an operational police station, located in lower Douglas, close to the town centre and I believe that to have a police station, jointly located at the fire station, would not be suitably local for the purpose of lower Douglas.

Finally, Mr Speaker, in terms of the location of the custody suite, I understand the main concern of the Member for Onchan is access. The cells, located in lower Douglas, are used on an overspill basis, when the cells located at the Police Headquarters are full.

The custody suite at the lower Douglas police station is located on the first floor of the building and the cells are accessed via the ground floor car park, which cannot be accessed by police vans. This can cause problems, where the prisoner is being non-compliant; therefore, each prisoner is risk-assessed at the point of arrest. In general terms, those assessed as having the potential for violence are not taken to lower Douglas police station. The view of the senior management of the Constabulary is that the issue is easily managed, given that the cells are used on an overspill basis.

Mr Speaker, the Department and the Constabulary, whilst acknowledging the issue in relation to the location of the custody suite, do believe it extremely beneficial to have a police station located in lower Douglas and, as I mentioned earlier, it is planned to acquire the station, in order to maintain a permanent presence there.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

**Mr Karran:** Vainstyr Loayreyder, can the Shirveishagh son Cooishyn Sthie, the Minister of Home Affairs, explain or tell this Hon. House, firstly: how much money have we spent, as far as this building is concerned, to date?

Can he also explain to this Hon. House, that he makes great play of the need for a police station there, how often is it actually open? Can the Shirveishagh also tell this Hon. House, apart from the fact that we spend £1 million, we managed to get the custody suite on the wrong level, we cannot use the police wagons, we cannot get the police wagons into the building, because of the poor design –

**Mr Houghton:** Wagon loads of prisoners!

**Mr Karran:** Does he feel that it would be far more responsible for us, for the protection of the taxpayer, to abandon this building and hand it back to the developers and let us go for a proper site somewhere else in the town?

**The Speaker:** Minister for Home Affairs to reply.

**The Minister:** Mr Speaker, I will try to reply to all the questions posed. I have not got the overall figure, with calculations of how much we have paid for the lease. As we have mentioned, the figure of £1,007,000 was there for the refurbishment of the police station. The purchase price is £2.75 million and I feel that it would be better for the Constabulary to purchase the building.

I understand the sentiments expressed by the Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Karran, in that I think I said last week, that the

footprint is a constraint, but it is an ideal situation, although we are restricted on the footprint.

Secondly, the police station is open for B Division and it is operational 24-hours of the day. If a person calls, then they call: there is a telephone outside, if the office is not open. That will then go upstairs for officers. If there are none there, that would then go to Police Headquarters and the officers will be contacted.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Douglas South, Mr Duggan.

**Mr Duggan:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, sir.

Could the Minister answer this question: why is the police station often, at night time, closed with 'Counter Closed Service' on it.

It is okay having an intercom or a telephone outside, but we spent all that money down there and it should be open at least until midnight, I would think, (A Member: Hear, hear.) but to have it shut is the problem, because we have not got enough policemen to man it.

**Mr Gill:** Get your act together.

**The Speaker:** Minister for Home Affairs to reply.

**The Minister:** Mr Speaker, first of all, I would not like to see police officers manning a desk, just for when people come in. If we are talking about having civilian staff, which is the case up at Police Headquarters, who then inform police officers...

I would like to have police officers being used more efficiently, when they are on the streets, going round with police patrols.

**Mr Duggan:** Never see them.

**Mr Houghton:** You never see them.

**The Minister:** And, secondly, Mr Speaker, –

**Mr Houghton:** Where are they?

**The Minister:** – we have to look at if the officers are there, if there is a phone outside, they can contact somebody inside. To have a 24-hour manning of civilian staff is very expensive indeed. If there are officers upstairs, who can be contacted, I think that is the best way forward.

**Mr Houghton:** They do not answer the doorbell.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Earnshaw.

**Mr Earnshaw:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I am interested in the comments that the Minister has made regarding the custody suite. Although he, no doubt, will not have the information with him today, I would like to ask him if he would kindly circulate information to Hon. Members, regarding the number of cells contained in the building and the usage of these since the police station came into operation.

**The Speaker:** Minister for Home Affairs to reply.

**The Minister:** Mr Speaker, I will gather those figures and I will circulate them to Members.

**Mr Earnshaw:** Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

**Mr Karran:** Vainstyr Loayreyder, would the Shirveishagh not agree that the fact is it would be far better saving the £2.75 million on purchasing the site, by actually putting it into a proper suite, a proper joint headquarters somewhere else in the town, where it can be efficiently and effectively managed?

Would the Shirveishagh not also agree that the fact is, that it is not in the interests of good policing to purchase this site? Is he aware of the rumours that I was told that the people who managed to lumber the taxpayers with this were some of the same people who managed to put the mortgages up for the purchase of the Nunnery site, at great cost to the taxpayer of the Isle of Man?

**The Speaker:** Minister for Home Affairs to reply.

**The Minister:** On the last part of the Question, I have no knowledge whatsoever on that, Mr Speaker.

No, sir, I believe that it is an ideal place to have a police station. I have also mentioned about the constraints on the site. If we were having to give the lease up, we would then have to restore the building – because it is a police station – take all the cells out, at a tremendous cost, because I do not think anybody who would take over the building, would want a custody suite with cells there.

I think, my own view, it is an ideal place and I do not think there is any point in wasting money and looking round for another site, sir. We have to purchase this, as we only have a small window of opportunity to purchase this building and this is coming up now.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Douglas East, Mrs Cannell.

**Mrs Cannell:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Whilst acknowledging that the location of the police station, being the centre of Douglas, is ideal, can the Minister offer some comfort in terms of sustainability? Is the existing building, currently located and designed, sustainable in the long term? Further, is there, actually, room on that particular site for any expansion, that might need to be considered in the future?

**The Speaker:** Minister for Home Affairs to reply.

**The Minister:** Mr Speaker, the facilities and the working conditions for the officers of B Division are far superior to the cramped conditions they had up at Police Headquarters and I know they are very happy with the building.

On the question of expansion, there is no available site at the moment around the lower Douglas police station. We would have to talk with the developers, who own the properties and the land in the neighbourhood.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

**Mr Karran:** Vainstyr Loayreyder, would the Shirveishagh son Cooishyn Sthie not agree, admittedly in hindsight now, that his Department has signed itself up into a stupid lease, with a stupid design? Also would the Shirveishagh not agree

that this just highlights the need for more parliamentary scrutiny, as there was only one Hon. Member who voted against this nonsense in the first place?

Would the Shirveishagh also not agree that it does weaken his case, when the place is shut most of the time, as far as the argument of the vast cost to the taxpayer for this facility, that could be spent on staff time, with policemen walking around the streets? Can he tell this Hon. House how often this building is actually open, when it is required?

**The Speaker:** Minister for Home Affairs to reply.

**The Minister:** Mr Speaker, no, I do not agree with the Hon. Member for Onchan in all those parts of the question he has asked.

On the final part, Mr Speaker, I think I have already answered it, on the opening.

### **Driver theory test CD Breakdown of costs**

1.5. The Hon. Member for Rushen (Mr Gill) to ask the Minister for Transport:

*(1) Can you confirm that the purchase cost of the official driver theory test CD is £8.50; and*

*(2) will you provide a breakdown of the particular costs associated with the production and distribution of this CD?*

**The Speaker:** Question 5. I call on the Hon. Member for Rushen, Mr Gill.

**Mr Gill:** Ta mee shirrey kied yn eysht y chur ta fo my ennym.

**The Speaker:** I call on the Hon. Member for Douglas West, Mr Shimmin, Minister for Transport to reply.

**The Minister for Transport (Mr Shimmin):** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

My Department, in conjunction with the Department of Education, replaced the paper-based, driver theory test for provisional licence holders with a computer-based test on 27th January this year. Since September 2004, all new provisional licence holders have been supplied with a CD, containing the theory test for training purposes.

This follows the increase from £10 to £13 for provisional driving licences, as approved by Tynwald in October 2004, so that the CD can be distributed to all new applicants at no further cost. Further training CDs have been on sale at the Vehicle Test Centre at a cost of £8 to other persons, such as driving instructors and persons whose provisional licence is pre-dated September.

I have been made aware that a figure of £8.50 has been quoted in the media and I apologise for this error. The £8 cost is made up of the cost of development and production of the training CD at £6.10 and the remainder, an administrative charge, rounded to £1.90.

These charges were determined, as an estimate, prior to receiving the full cost of production and demand for the items. I can advise the House, that, since September, a

total of 30 CDs have been purchased at this price from the Vehicle Test Centre.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Rushen, Mr Gill.

**Mr Gill:** Yes, thank you. I thank you, Minister for the answer.

Given that the £6 element of the £8 is for development and production, would he confirm that that is a one-off cost, effectively, and that, therefore, we can see a consequential decrease in the cost of the CDs to reflect the ongoing costs?

**The Speaker:** Minister for Transport to reply.

**The Minister:** Mr Speaker, in January 2000, the UK, when they changed over to the driver theory test being computer based, we had negotiations with the UK contractor to modify the computer test, but the costs were not acceptable. Instead, the mechanism which we have used, which is with... A computer software consultant was engaged to develop the current arrangement. Certainly, the process, now being purely for the Isle of Man legislation, rather than a variation to the UK model, is beneficial to the people of the Island.

Certainly, it is not envisaged that this CD will have to be updated more frequently than once a year and, now that much of the work will have been done, I would assume that the cost would come down. Certainly, that would be our intention to try and keep prices to a minimum.

However, I would point out that a 12-month provisional licence is still approximately half of one lesson for those people learning. So I do not believe the costs involved are significant.

#### **Drivers' blood alcohol limit Tynwald approval of reduction**

1.6. The Hon. Member for Douglas North (Mr Houghton) to ask the Minister for Transport:

*(1) Do you intend to reduce the blood alcohol limit from 80 ml to 50 ml in April this year; and, if so*

*(2) will you gain Tynwald approval before implementation?*

**The Speaker:** Question 6. Hon. Member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

**Mr Houghton:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I beg leave to ask the Question standing in my name, sir.

**The Speaker:** I call on the Hon. Member for Douglas West, Mr Shimmin, Minister for Transport, to reply.

**The Minister for Transport (Mr Shimmin):** Yes, Mr Speaker, I can confirm that it is my intention to reduce the blood/alcohol limit, in order to minimise accidents arising from drinking and driving, although it is not yet guaranteed that this will be done in April of this year.

As Hon. Members will be aware, the introduction of such a major change in statute law cannot, and will not, take place

without the approval of Tynwald. It is, therefore, my intention to bring an Order before Tynwald under section 7E(5) and 74(3)(b) of the Road Traffic Act 1985, which will propose to reduce the blood/alcohol limit from 80 milligrams in 100 millilitres of water to 50 milligrams.

The date when the Order is brought before Tynwald will be dependent upon my Department completing consultations with the Chief Constable's Office, the High Bailiff's Office and the scientific agencies to determine whether, in the Order, the corresponding reduction in limits for alcohol in breath and urine samples should respectively be 22 micrograms, instead of the current 35; and 67 milligrams instead of the current 107 milligrams. This is a technical, scientific area, which my Department is still pursuing at the moment, sir.

Subject to Tynwald approving the Order, the date for it coming into operation will be such as to give the Department's Road Safety Unit sufficient time to carry out a joint publicity campaign with the Police authorities on the change in law. The timescale will also enable the Police to recalibrate their breath analysis equipment.

However, should the Order be approved, possibly at the April sitting of Tynwald, it is unlikely that the change in law would be effective until late in 2005.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Douglas North. No?

**Mr Houghton:** I thank the Hon. Member for his Answer, sir.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Middle, Mr Quayle.

**Mr Quayle:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Could I ask if the Minister believes that, if we introduce the measure referred to, it will cause a differential between the Isle of Man and the United Kingdom, where none exists at the moment and to other parts of Europe and may cause problems to visitors to our shores?

Secondly, may I ask him, before finalising his Department's stance on this issue, can he circulate to Hon. Members the number of accidents, if any, caused by drivers of vehicles, having between the 50 ml and 80 ml limit during the last five years?

**The Speaker:** Minister for Transport to reply.

**The Minister:** Mr Speaker, we all, in this Chamber, represent the people of the Isle of Man and make laws suitable for the people of the Isle of Man (**Mrs Hannan:** Hear, hear.) Other areas in Europe and the United Kingdom have their own legislation for their own purposes and people.

Certainly, if the Hon. Member wishes to write to my Department, I will provide him with that information. It comes at the conclusion of what is the most substantial period of consultation with the public, regarding all aspects of road safety throughout the Island. I do not propose to research a range of measures that have already been done, unless specifically requested by the Hon. Member.

**Mr Quayle:** I would ask your Department.

**The Minister:** This is an issue that we have looked at. We have got consultation from the public, which did include Members of Tynwald, those who chose to respond.

We believe, that in conjunction with the Police, it will

have an impact on reducing both the culture and the number of accidents on the Island.

It is no longer acceptable for people to consider that they can drink and drive on this Island without suffering penalties. We are aware that the message is still not getting across. Every week we read of people who still continue to abuse the law at present and we need to do something to try and get the message across.

It did appear that we were winning this message, but evidence would now show that more people are choosing to take the chance. We believe that this is a measure supported by the majority of the public. We will come to Tynwald for their view and the Hon. Member and all other Members will have an opportunity of expressing their view at that time.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

**Mr Karran:** Vainstyr Loayreyder, a supplementary.

Would the Shirveishagh not agree that the fact is, when we pass such licensing hours to allow them to be open all hours, that we can be held partly responsible about the issue? (A Member: Hear, hear.)

Would the Shirveishagh also not agree that, as I am, more likely, the first Member to try and propose a breathalyser test, believe in random breath tests, one is not wanting to protect people who drink and drive, can he explain why we are reducing this level to 50 milligrams? Is this to try and justify the fact that you want to build another £40 million prison and we have got to find someone to fill it?

Would the Shirveishagh not agree that the people outside this House would say that they do not tolerate drinking and driving, but they do express concern that it seems that motorists are the easy meat, as far as society... when we should be trying to get the drug pushers and the real criminals off our roads?

**The Speaker:** Minister for Transport to reply.

**Mr Corkill:** They are not allowed to drink, either.

**The Minister:** Mr Speaker, rather wide-ranging, and I would point out to the House that all of us have certain responsibilities which fall under our umbrella. Road safety is the primary driving force behind the Highways Division of my Department.

This is not purely, in isolation, an issue of drink driving. We are running out, over the next 12 months, a whole range of measures designed to try and improve road safety on our Island.

It is nothing to do with any further diversions into other areas of prison numbers. We are looking at issues which, we believe, will provide safety to our people on the roads. Certainly, I am aware that the Hon. Member is supportive of many of those road safety initiatives. He has been a long campaigner for many of these issues, as have others.

We believe that, by doing this as part of a measure of packages, we will begin to have an impact on driver behaviour. To do nothing would be more negligent.

I apologise to the Hon. Member if he has got other issues he wants to come back at me on, but, certainly, this should not be seen in isolation. The motorists are not being seen as a soft target for raising revenue.

What is the reality is that my Department has more complaints on the issue of speeding, parking and accidents.

Therefore, we have a responsibility to try and take measures. That is what we are proposing, not just this in isolation, but as part of a package, after a lengthy consultation.

**The Speaker:** Member for Douglas East, Mrs Cannell.

**Mrs Cannell:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Can the Minister advise us, in terms of the overall strategy to which he has just alluded – when he talks about one of a range of a package of measures – whether his Department, together with the Department of Tourism, are planning to step up the publicity campaign to actually advise and inform those who are visiting our shores, should this (Mr Cretney: Hear, hear.) further restriction on drink driving actually come in and be approved by Tynwald? Has that been budgeted for?

**The Speaker:** Minister for Transport to reply.

**The Minister:** Yes, Mr Speaker, we have redirected a number of resources within the Department to the Highways area, under the road safety umbrella.

For Hon. Members' information, we now have the sergeant responsible for traffic from the Isle of Man Police, co-working with us down in the Department two or three days every week, so that the relationship with the Police on issues regarding road safety is much more closely monitored.

The issue regarding publicity, both to our own people and to those visiting, is an integral part of the whole scheme. Indeed, we are hoping to move toward reciprocal bans for driving offences. (Mr Cretney: Hear, hear.) Again, that is something my hon. friend, the Minister for Tourism and Leisure, has been pushing for some time and we do need to know that those people visiting the Island have had full access to the information. Whether they take notice of that is beyond my control, but we do have an obligation to ensure that those issues are communicated, both to our own people and to visitors.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Karran. I would ask the Hon. Member not to make statements, ask questions.

**Mr Karran:** Vainstyr Loayreyder, would the Shirveishagh give this Hon. House the evidence of the breakdown of the amount of accidents that have been done on Manx roads, who have been breathalysed, who are over 50 milligrams and under 80 milligrams? Can the Shirveishagh give that information to this Hon. House? Are we out on a fishing expedition, as far as this issue is concerned?

Can the Shirveishagh also explain to this Hon. House, and reassure this Hon. House, that he has that sort of information, as far as the research is concerned, better than his colleague in the Department of Home Affairs, who wants us to spend £40 million on a prison –

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member.

**Mr Karran:** – and we do not know what the prisoners are in there for.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member!

Hon. Member, Douglas West, Mr Shimmin, Minister of Transport, to reply.

**The Minister:** Thank you.

Mr Speaker, I am a little bit disappointed, knowing the Hon. Member for Onchan's strong views on road safety issues, that he is trying to use this –

**Mr Karran:** I am looking for facts.

**The Minister:** – as a football for other areas. One of the main concerns expressed by a number of members of the public and, indeed, some members on the road safety consultation exercise, was the evaluation of the statistics which we used. That is why I will ask the Hon. Member for Middle and the Hon. Member for Onchan to write in, requesting specific levels of information, so we can provide accurately, rather than a scattergun approach of all this information. We have the information available.

What is also available is the number of people who are caught drinking and driving and the Hon. Member's argument almost follows that, if they have not had an accident, then it is acceptable.

We are attempting to prevent accidents by giving a clear message, that this is not to be tolerated. The fact that some members of the public choose to drink and drive and then do not have an accident, but are caught, is good fortune, rather than planning. We have got to get the message that it is not acceptable. The only way of doing that is to try and prevent the incidents taking place, which will, in turn, prevent the accidents taking place. So, yes, we have the statistics.

Those statistics –

**Mr Karran:** Let us see them.

**The Minister:** – are available within the Department.

I will endeavour to work with the two Hon. Members to provide as much information – we are not trying to hide anything – and I do consider it somewhat unfortunate that the level of communication of information that we have already provided on this exercise, I believe, does my Department great credit, that we have attempted to give as much information as openly as we can, including the summary of our findings that has all gone to Hon. Members. Now they are using an opportunity to try and see if they can have that replaced once again. It has been given to Hon. Members in the best format we can. If they have specifics, I would ask them to come back with those specifics.

**The Speaker:** I would just ask the Hon. Minister, if he is providing information relating to Questions in the House to Hon. Members, that it would be circulated to all Hon. Members.

**The Minister:** That is why I have attempted, Mr Speaker, to say I would expect those Hon. Members to come back with specific questions, because the amount of statistical evidence that has already been provided to Members, I believe, will cover these issues. If there is anything outside of that, then I would ask the Hon. Members to make me aware, because, at the moment, I would have too many options and would have to, basically, repeat the whole exercise of that report.

So, at the moment, I do not believe I have given any commitment that I will circulate, pending further requests from the Members.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Earnshaw.

**Mr Earnshaw:** Yes, thank you, Mr Speaker.

Would the Minister agree with me that the great majority of the public are responsible regarding this matter? They either do not drink when they intend to drive, or they do not drive when they intend to drink.

As the proposed levels that he has talked about, at the beginning of this Question, would be so low – which I support – to remove any doubts and areas of confusion regarding this matter, will his Department be considering going the whole hog and, perhaps, banning drinking and driving altogether?

**The Speaker:** Minister for Transport to reply.

**The Minister:** Mr Speaker, we get onto one of your particular areas of interest, which is the dilution of alcohol in the bloodstream and how long that actually takes.

If we were to go to a zero rate, as I think the Hon. Member for Onchan is considering, the difficulty would be that those persons who have had alcohol one night time and have not chosen to drive whilst drinking, the following morning there may still be an element of alcohol within their bloodstream. This can present a significant problem, if people have had excess alcohol one night, that they may still be over the limit in the morning.

However, if somebody has gone and had a number of pints or drinks the evening before, they will still have some alcohol in their bloodstream.

This is a measure which is determined to try – and it will obviously have to get the support of Tynwald, so we are not trying to bounce this into the members of the public or the House – it is something which is designed to be reflecting practice in other areas. It is... As the Hon. Member for Middle was referring to other countries, there are variations in those countries and some do follow the pattern that we are proposing.

So, yes, I can understand the Hon. Member. However, we are attempting to get a balance, which will win public support and political support without being too draconian.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Rushen, Mr Gill.

**Mr Gill:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Could the Minister confirm that none of the arguments he has put forward today were omitted from the debate when the current limits were set, sir, and he is not bringing any new arguments to the table, other than an argument to introduce a further restriction, (**Mr Karran:** Hear, hear.) with no particular evidence that is necessary?

**The Speaker:** Minister for Transport to reply.

**The Minister:** Mr Speaker, we have various Departments of Government with responsibilities. We have the Police service with responsibilities...

We come forward, as in a democracy, with views that we believe will benefit the people of the Island. If that is not engendering the support of the House, it does not go forward. The argument, almost being purported, would be that we did not choose to come through with anything different.

We have consulted with the public and the Members of Tynwald – those who wished to contribute – we have determined that a majority of those who expressed a view on this, were supportive of it.

We had a large range of consultation responses and we believe that we have sufficient strength of view from my Department, from the Police, and from the public, to come forward with this proposal.

If it is not going to be something which this House supports, then I would be interested to see on what grounds those Hon. Members feel we should go, in order to try and curtail the amount of drinking and driving which still pervades the Island on a daily and a weekly basis. It is only those that the Police catch who are actually the ones who are penalised.

I believe there are a majority of very good, sensitive and sensible drivers, but I also know that, every week, the Police are catching people drinking and driving. Many of those people are capable of causing death or injury to other road users and themselves. We are attempting to resolve that.

If Hon. Members do not wish us to go down that route, then they can explain why they believe it is inappropriate.

**The Speaker:** Member for Douglas East, Mrs Cannell.

**Mrs Cannell:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

In order to be helpful for the Hon. Minister, could he not provide the necessary evidence that some of the new Members of the House of Keys would like to see by way of copying, perhaps, the papers which his Department presented to the Council of Ministers, when they were seeking to introduce support for an all-Island speed limit. Would that evidence and those papers not substantiate the requirement to further reduce the drinking when driving?

Further, would he agree with me that such evidence would also show that there are peaks and troughs in this particular area – being holiday time, Christmas time, bank holiday time – which are usually those occasions when more people are actually caught drink driving than, perhaps, at other times of the year?

**The Speaker:** Minister of Transport to reply.

**The Minister:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I am grateful to the Hon. Member for her comments. I do believe that we have openly, both on web pages and hard copy, made available to Members the results of our consultation exercise.

That has not only just gone to Council of Ministers, it is my belief that that has gone to all Members. I certainly will research to see whether it is worth reviewing, sending out the fairly substantial amounts of documentation to Hon. Members, whether we can make it available further on the web page, which we have always tried to be as open as we can regarding this. Certainly, it is true that there are peaks and troughs regarding drink driving and other motoring offences.

I would point out to Hon. Members that one of those peaks is coming up within the next couple of months, which is prior to TT period. There are always a number of bikers who choose to go out on clear evenings and the number of accidents at that time is significant.

I would, honestly, urge Hon. Members to please engage with my Department. If they are concerned about road safety, they are on the same side as us. We are trying to resolve and improve situations. Come and talk to us and find out the information that we will gladly share.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Karran. A final supplementary.

**Mr Karran:** Vainstyr Loayreyder, can the Shirveishagh just give the evidence to every Member of this Hon. House – the evidence of the breakdown of accidents of people who were 50 milligrams or over, but under 80 milligrams.

Can he circulate to this Hon. House, and would the Shirveishagh not agree that the fact is, many of us support random breath testing, but we would like to see the proof of the issue of why it should be brought down to 50 milligrams? Where is the proof?

**The Speaker:** Minister for Transport to reply.

**The Minister:** Mr Speaker, I have said, in answer to this Question that, before any change, I will be coming to Tynwald with an Order. At that time we will provide all of the evidence that we consider appropriate to be given –

**Mr Karran:** Give it now.

**The Minister:** – consideration.

This is a Question in the House that is two months prior to the possibility of it coming to Tynwald. Therefore, we will be collating that information, as I have advised in the Answer to the Question, regarding consultation with other parties, concerning the scientific issues and, yes, we will need to present a case to the House. I will ensure that that is submitted to all Hon. Members, so that they have enough time to consider the evidence and question that evidence prior to it coming to Tynwald.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Members, that concludes Questions for Oral Answer. We have Questions for Written Answer at Item 2, of which there are five, which have been circulated to Hon. Members.

## Questions for Written Answer

### CHIEF MINISTER

#### New MEA power station generating plant Problems and cost to rectify

2.1. The Hon. Member for Michael (Mr Cannan) to ask the Chief Minister:

- (1) Are there and have there been, significant problems with the new generating plant at the new Manx Electricity Authority power station; and, if so
- (2) have the problems been rectified; and, if so
- (3) at what cost and whose cost?

**Answer:** I am advised that the first year of operation of the Pulrose CCGT power station provided the MEA with the opportunity to evaluate the reliability and capability of the new plant against the specifications.

Detailed monitoring of the plant during operation identified technical issues that, whilst not affecting the day to day operation of the plant, could influence the long term reliability and the cost of maintaining the plant.

The MEA has received first class technical support from

the Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) and was able to have alterations made to the plant in the summer of 2004 to remedy the identified technical issues.

The effectiveness of the alterations is being evaluated during the second year of operation, with the full co-operation and assistance of the OEMs. Currently the CCGT plant is fully operational.

The alterations made to the plant by the OEMs have been carried out at the expense of the OEMs, as required by their respective contracts.

## TREASURY

### Chief Secretary Salary for last 10 years

2.2. The Hon. Member for Rushen (Mr Gill) to ask the Minister for the Treasury:

*What has the salary been of the post-holder of Chief Secretary for each of the past ten years?*

**Answer:**

Table 2.2.A

Date	Annual Salary £
1st August 1995	49,216
1st January 1996	51,185
1st August 1996	52,271
1st August 1997	57,133
1st August 1998	58,578
1st August 1999	62,323
1st August 2000	85,000
1st August 2001	92,195
1st August 2002	97,358
1st August 2003	99,549
1st August 2004	105,024

## HOME AFFAIRS

### Blood alcohol retention Average hourly reduction

2.3. The Hon. Member for Douglas North (Mr Houghton) to ask the Minister for Home Affairs:

*What is the average hourly reduction in blood alcohol retention after each hour following the consumption of alcoholic drinks?*

**Answer:** Whilst the Department of Home Affairs is happy to provide the Answer to this Question, the contents have been provided by the Public Health Directorate of the DHSS.

In response to the Question, on the elimination of alcohol from a person who has ingested the same, it has been presumed that the Question relates only to elimination, because there are a number of factors that influence absorption

and distribution, including body weight, gender, type of alcohol, concurrent organ pathology and stomach content. The Question is not 100 per cent clear. Where it seems to mix hourly reduction with retention, so it has been assumed that the request is in relation to obtaining clarification on the elimination of blood alcohol content (BAC).

It is widely accepted that blood alcohol is eliminated at a fairly constant rate, known as Widmark's Beta constant. Though the rate varies very slightly between individuals, depending on individual metabolic rates – metabolic rates are influenced by such things as food ingestion, illness and age – the average rate of elimination of alcohol from blood is approximately 0.15 (15 mg per 100 mls) per hour, where 0.15 roughly equates to one average drink e.g. beer or one small glass of wine or 0.5 oz (15 mls) of alcohol. Differences between individual rates have been shown to vary by up to 20 per cent, e.g. persons with liver disease show increased rates on occasion.

It is also prudent to note that length of time from absorption of alcohol will impact on expected blood alcohol levels and thus elimination – and so 'top up' drinks – need to be included in any calculation.

Thus, if one has ingested three beers at up to 10 p.m. and drinks no more alcohol and leaves the pub at midnight – it takes up to two hours for full absorption to take place – it will be 3 a.m. before the beer is eliminated. At 2 a.m. there may well be illegal limits of alcohol still in the blood.

## TRANSPORT

### Airport runway Breakdown of consultation fees

2.4. The Hon. Member for Onchan (Mr Karran) to ask the Minister for Transport:

*What are the details of the breakdown of costs to the taxpayer to finance the £1.5 million consulting fees for the extension of the airport runway?*

**Answer:** The June 2004 sitting of Tynwald approved a motion to provide the sum of £1.5 million from the capital budget in respect of pre-contract site and marine investigation, environmental impact assessment and design fees, for carrying out an evaluation of the options for adoption and implementation of the new runway end safety area requirements for runway 08/26.

It was explained that the work would determine the effective runway length, having regard not only for commercial constraints, but also the recent changes to the safety standards for runway end safety areas. Also, a full review of the marketing and economic impacts to the Island was to be carried out.

The work, which is currently under way, will lead to the submission of a planning application, with financial provision included to support the application, as necessary, at appeal.

The breakdown of costs was submitted to the Treasury Capital Projects Unit in the course of obtaining concurrence to bring forward the motion and is as follows:

Table 2.4.A

		Estimated further breakdown
1	Modelling Incl. wind, sea, tidal sediment, suspended silt	80,000
2	Environmental Impact Assessment Incl. Environmental consultant and environmental surveys	230,000 142,725 87,275
3	Surveys and site investigations Incl. topographic survey pavement survey seabed, wave, current surveys ground investigations	220,000
4	Design team and project management Incl. Engineer Employers agent Cost advice	600,000 326,925 184,825 89,538
5	Planning supervisor	40,000
6	Specialist airport advisors Incl. Marketing and economic study Aeronautical ground lighting Airport parameters	80,000 35,000 25,000 20,000
7	Public Relations	20,000
8	Planning application appeal	150,000
9	Client direct costs	80,000
	Total	1,500,000

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY

### Counselling service

#### Average waiting times and administrative process

2.5. The Hon. Member for Rushen (Mr Gill) to ask the Minister for Health and Social Security:

- (1) What is the average waiting time for a person referred to your Department's Counselling Service now;
- (2) how does this compare with six months and one year ago;
- (3) what referral 'routes' have been introduced during the past six months;
- (4) have these introduced new administrative processes and had the effect of discouraging clients who perceive an increased number of staff aware of their circumstances or difficulties; and
- (5) will you confirm your commitment to providing a service focused on 'client needs'?

**Answer:** (1) Eight weeks.

(2) Waiting list times were between eight and twelve weeks and have been reduced through the appointment of a temporary member of staff in September last year.

(3) All referrals are now processed through one point of access, known as the Central Referral Team.

(4) The development of the Central Referral Team includes both a Crisis Response Service and an Advice Clinic, neither of which were available to counselling clients previously. As a result, an immediate risk assessment can be made by qualified professionals and, when appropriate, a client seen within 24 hours.

(5) The Department has and will continue to provide and develop services based on client need. It has been agreed that counsellors will establish an advice clinic specifically for clients referred to their service, thus providing a more responsive service and further reduction in waiting times.

## Orders of the Day

### BILLS FOR FIRST READING

#### Mental Health (Amendment) Bill

#### Fertiliser and Feeding Stuffs (Amendment) Bill

**The Speaker:** I now go on to Item 3 on the Order Paper and I call on the Secretary of the House, Bills for First Reading.

**The Secretary:** Mr Speaker, there are two Bills for First Reading.

The first is the Mental Health (Amendment) Bill, introduced by the Hon. Member for Garff, Mr Rodan.

The second is the Fertiliser and Feeding Stuffs (Amendment) Bill, introduced by the Hon. Member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Members, that concludes the business before the House. The House will now stand adjourned until Tuesday next, 1st March at 10.00 a.m. in our own Chamber. Thank you, Hon. Members.

*The House adjourned at 10.55 a.m.*