

THE STATES OF DELIBERATION
of the
ISLAND OF GUERNSEY

29th April 2025

Proposition No. P.2025/62

COMMITTEE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

FUTURE INERT WASTE DISPOSAL AND WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
INCLUDING THE FUTURE STRATEGIC USE OF LES VARDES QUARRY

AMENDMENT

Proposed by: Deputy M A J Helyar

Seconded by: Deputy R C Murray

In Proposition 1, to delete “, and to agree that Les Vardes Quarry shall be the preferred option for freshwater storage once quarrying activities there cease” and to insert a new proposition as follows:

- “2. To agree that Les Vardes Quarry shall be the preferred option for freshwater storage once quarrying activities there cease.”.

Rule 4(1) Information

- a) The propositions contribute to the delivery of the States strategic plans by seeking to maintain and improve strategic provision of waste sites and water storage as per the original proposition 1.
- b) In preparing the amended propositions, no consultation has taken place with the Committee for the Environment and Infrastructure as the amendment does not alter the substance of the original proposition, it merely separates its constituent parts into two propositions.
- c) The propositions have been submitted to His Majesty’s Procurer for advice on any legal or constitutional implications.

- d) There are no financial implications to the amendment, which replicate in substance the original proposition but in separate parts.
- e) Drafting advice has been sought from the States' Greffier and no advice has been sought from the Officers of the Committee *for the* Environment & Infrastructure.

Explanatory Note

1. The Committee for Environment & Infrastructure's policy letter seeks the approval of a single proposition in relation to land reclamation at Black Rock, St Sampsons, and at the same time the strategic earmarking of Les Vardes Quarry (which is in private ownership) for future water storage.
2. These two issues are not linked or in any way co-dependent. Reclamation and dumping of inert waste at Black Rock can commence and continue under revised proposition 1. without any necessity for earmarking les Vardes Quarry for water resources at this time.
3. This amendment should be non-contentious as members will still be able to approve proposals for Black Rock and Les Vardes, or to approve either of them as they see fit following debate.
4. Any earmarking of Les Vardes Quarry for water resource is stated in the policy letter as requiring estimated capital spending of £20m by Guernsey Water (which has no such capital available) and would require successful negotiation for the acquisition of Les Vardes, which is currently in private ownership.
5. The lowest price available to the last P&R committee to acquire Les Vardes Quarry was £12m but was dependent on other beneficial fund raising arrangements which have not been followed up by the responsible committees and which may no longer be available so this valuation is conservative.
6. The owner is under no obligation to sell the quarry and earmarking it will create an obvious unequal bargaining position for the States as the only purchaser.
7. The Blackrock scheme may well be desirable but there are several reasons why it may not happen. It does not have planning permission, no assessment of tidal effects has been conducted and finance (currently estimated at £38m) is not available within current funding and investment planning envelope. It is also a tight timeframe to achieve consents, secure finance and build rock protection before Longue Houge inert waste stockpiling is estimated to be full.

8. If the up front finance for Black Rock and Les Vardes is expected to be funded centrally from reserves then it should be borne in mind that all major capital planning (school, runway, hospital) by government in the past 5 years has turned out 40% or more expensive than original estimates – the conservative combined estimated cost of this policy letter (£20m, £12m, £38m) is therefore likely to turn out at £70m plus 40% or £98m which in the current financial circumstances of the States of Guernsey is fantasy. Guernsey simply does not have this money to spend.
9. Closing off Les Vardes as a potential self-funding long term inert waste option before Blackrock is confirmed and has commenced would also be a gross strategic error on the part of government, leaving it with no inert waste storage option if Blackrock does not happen for whatever reason, be it planning, physical constraints or lack of finance. The decision on Les Vardes simply does not need to be taken at this time.
10. The policy letter contains limited justification for additional water resource requirements - the Island already has more than twice as much water storage capacity as Jersey, and sixteen times as much as the UK¹, annual rainfall is increasing, and scientific evidence points to increased cloud cover and rainfall in mid latitudes in the event of future warming, leading to increasing convection and more intense precipitation.
11. The island has not required water restrictions to be put in place for 35 years and there is no credible evidence presented in the policy letter that this is an increasing likelihood. For example - several equally likely and credible climate scenarios place northern Atlantic latitudes at significant risk of cooling due to weakening of the AMOC previously known as the “gulf stream”, which carries 35% of all energy into northern latitudes and powers the UK and Western European climate².
12. These papers predict more intense rainfall, suggesting our investment priority should be in collecting more of what falls and currently goes to waste due to inadequate pumping capacity, rather than increasing our storage capacity. Such changes are not in any event predicted in these scientific papers until the 22nd century.

¹ UK water storage, when full, is 3,550 litres per person. In Guernsey it is 54,000 litres per person, Jersey 26,000. Guernsey ranks number 8 in western countries.

² <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.adr3243> <https://www.nature.com/articles/srep14877>
https://phys.org/news/2024-10-cooling-shift-ocean-circulation-temper.html#google_vignette

13. No allowance has been made for improvements and reductions in cost of reverse osmosis and other technologies capable of providing potable desalinated water over the next 100 years.
14. When assessing climate scenarios it should be very much emphasised that current weather models cannot accurately predict the weather in 2 weeks time at a regional scale, let alone for a place as small as Guernsey, and these are the same models used for assessing the impacts of global warming.
15. Above all, Guernsey cannot afford these plans, even if they were credible and imminently pressing, which they are not. A more prudent approach would be to keep options open and certainly not commit the public to increased water bills at a time when the cost of living is one of our biggest problems.