



Media Release

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Bulwer Avenue Fire Report: Statements from agencies mentioned

Committee for Home Affairs President Mary Lowe said:

“Owing to the huge plume of smoke, this was an event everyone in Guernsey quickly became aware of and followed throughout the day. Our highly trained emergency services, along with other supporting teams, deserve full credit for everything they did to bring this fire to a safe and successful conclusion. They worked tirelessly in challenging conditions with the entire island watching. The Committee is pleased to note through this report the incident has provided opportunities for all involved to learn from the experience. Once again, I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in the emergency response that day – we are proud of you all.”

Trading Assets

States of Guernsey Trading Assets Deputy Managing Director Richard Evans said: “The Household Waste and Recycling Centre at Longue Hougue is where the public can drop off items such as electronic devices, batteries and a wide range of other materials.

The operators of the site recognise that lithium batteries pose a risk. Following the fire at the Guernsey Recycling’s yard in 2018, States Works and Guernsey Waste reviewed procedures in an effort to remove all batteries from devices before they enter the recycling stream. It is therefore important that anyone using the site makes staff aware if they are bringing any electrical goods so these can be dealt with appropriately. Signs are in place to advise visitors of this requirement.

The procedures are working well, but we can never be complacent. While we may not be able to guarantee no battery will ‘slip through the net’, it is very important that everyone follows the procedures that we have in place at all points of the process. This will help to guard against items ending up somewhere that they pose a risk.”

Joint Emergency Services Control Centre

Guernsey Police Chief Inspector Ian Scholes said: ‘Working together to save lives.’ This is the reason for the joint control centre so it is pleasing to see how things work together when there is a major incident such as this. The benefit of having all command and control elements in one place was evident as the joint situational awareness was key in delivering a successful outcome. The success of this operation will now be translated into a training scenario, as per

the reports recommendation, so we respond as effectively to future major incidents as we did that day

Environmental Health

Director of Environmental Health and Pollution Regulation Tobin Cook said: “Officers from the Office of Environmental Health and Pollution Regulation attended the scene during the incident on 3rd August 2018. Subsequently officers carried out an investigation to review compliance with the operator’s Waste Management Licence and to consider further action that may be necessary, including the revision of licence conditions. The investigation was carried out in collaboration with other States bodies and external parties, including the site operator and the fire investigation company.

Whilst the fire was avoidable, and it is imperative that lessons are learned as a result of the incident, I am pleased to note that the site engineering prevented ground and water borne pollution. I agree with the conclusions within the report and action has been taken to address the recommendation that specifically relates to the functions of the Office of Environmental Health and Pollution Regulation (recommendation 14).

Following the investigation and site audit, the Waste Management Licence for the site has been reviewed and amended accordingly. The revised licence was issued in November 2018. Changes have been made to the Fire Plan for the site and regarding fire prevention measures onsite. The Office of Environmental Health and Pollution Regulation is continuing to work with the site operators, in consultation with the Fire and Rescue Service and the Health and Safety Executive, as further measures are implemented to ensure compliance with the revised Waste Management Licence and to ensure that controls remain in place to protect against environmental pollution.”

Corporate Communications

Rob Moore, States of Guernsey Senior Media & PR officer said: ““We acknowledge the findings of the report and welcome the recommendations made relating to communications. Before those recommendations were made available to us, senior members of the Corporate Communications team began a review of the major incident communications strategy. At the time of this fire, the Home Affairs Communications Officer role was vacant. It is now filled by a full-time member of staff. That officer, supported by the wider communications team was responsible for comms during another more recent major incident, the search for the missing aircraft this January. That incident placed the island under international media scrutiny. The effectiveness of the communications from this event has been widely recognised. We hope this demonstrates improvements have been, and will continue to be made.”

Guernsey Airport

A Guernsey Airport Spokesman said: “Guernsey Airport will carefully examine the recommendations contained in the report on the Fire at the Guernsey Recycling site at Bulwer Avenue in August 2018. Joint working, recruitment, procurement and training exercises between the Airport and the Guernsey Fire and Rescue Services already takes place whenever

possible. We will continue to explore how these links can be further enhanced and developed in the future.

“The Airport Fire Service can support and assist the Guernsey Fire and Rescue Service in dealing with major incidents, either by supplying off duty airport firefighters, specialist foam producing appliances, or in rare cases, providing these assets directly from the on duty crews at the Airport Fire Station.

“Requests for assistance always have to be balanced with current airport operations and flight movements. The impact of releasing airport firefighters and fire appliances has to be carefully managed, to maintain appropriate cover for active aircraft movements.”