

**REPLY BY THE MINISTER OF
THE COMMERCE AND EMPLOYMENT DEPARTMENT
TO A QUESTION ASKED PURSUANT TO RULE 6 OF THE
RULES OF PROCEDURE BY DEPUTY L TROTT**

1. *Do you agree that the service provided by the Island's arboriculturists is a necessary and valuable part of the Island's broader economy and that the utilisation of the waste material generated as fuel and mulch, rather than waste material requiring disposal, is a good example of sustainable environmental management that helps towards reducing CO2 emissions?*

The Commerce and Employment Department fully values the service that the Island's arboriculturists provide to the community. The value to Island residents of by-products that arise from those services, principally logs and wood chipping mulch, is equally recognised.

2. *Do you agree that the nature of the activity involved, with its low impact in terms of neighbour amenity, is one that can be readily assimilated into a relatively rural/ agricultural or undeveloped location rather than within a designated industrial site?*

From the Department's knowledge of the activities of arboriculturists it is understood that the impact they have will vary from business to business. Inevitably, however there is a high degree of noise pollution from chainsaw and woodchipper activity and this is not low impact. In regard to the siting of such activities, any commercial activity must take place upon premises in accordance with the provisions of the Planning Law and the planning policies of the Rural Area Plan, or Urban Area Plan, as applicable.

3. *Do you accept that, given the limited areas of land allocated for industrial development, it is naïve to expect such a low impact, relatively low value, process to compete with more conventional intensive industrial and/or storage activities on a free market basis?*

The issue of whether tree surgery and associated activities are relatively 'low value processes', is questionable and something of a distraction. The fundamental point is that commercial activities of all descriptions have to take place on or in premises in compliance with the Planning Law and supporting land use policies.

4. *Can you confirm that, in reality, there are no suitable sites available for this kind of activity and what dialogue, if any, has taken place between your Department and the Environment Department to address this problem?*

During the second half of 2012 officers of my Department investigated the premises needs of small and start up businesses. Despite extensive research no clear evidence of unmet need was established. Furthermore, information gathered by the Environment Department revealed that, as at the end of 2012, the availability of vacant commercial premises (excluding offices and retail premises) was greater than at any time before.

My Department works very closely with the Environment Department and this was reflected in amendments in 2010 to the Rural Plans that resulted in the designation of three sites for yards and small workshops. We also worked closely with Environment on the relaxation of criteria that apply to the re-use of horticultural sites within the Urban Area.

5. *How would the Commerce and Employment Department propose to address issues of this nature?*

The Department is encouraged to note that the Strategic Land Use Plan, approved by the Assembly in November 2011, has inbuilt flexibility to facilitate changing land use needs. It is intended, we understand, that the Development Plan that will replace the existing Urban and Rural Area Plans will also provide

flexibility. Commerce and Employment has for some months been working with Environment to ensure that the evolving Development Plan will make adequate provision for commercial premises, (and by 'commercial premises' I mean land and/or the built environment), to meet existing and reasonably anticipated needs across all business sectors. However, this is a matter that must be approached strategically and our ongoing work includes developing means by which commercial needs can be evidence based which will enable land supply to be periodically reviewed and adjusted as necessary.

Date of Receipt of the Question: 12th June 2013

Date of Reply: 18th June 2013