

Ecréhous: CCTV considered to monitor people and wildlife

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THE installation of CCTV on the Ecréhous reef is being considered to protect wildlife and also to tackle growing anti-social behaviour, including bitter rows over moorings, the Environment Minister has said.

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Picture: JON GUEGAN. (26997385)

Deputy John Young backed calls from St Martin politicians, who have responsibility for the reef, to deploy honorary police officers to the Ecréhous on a RIB during busy periods. He also raised concerns about the environmental impact that increased volumes of visitors was having – particularly on seal and common-teal populations.

And the minister has said he approached some members of the Ecréhous Residents Association, who look after and own fishing huts and holiday homes on the reef, about acting as wardens but, he said, they were reluctant to do so because of ‘bad incidents of nasty anti-social behaviour’.

‘I was delighted with the Constable [Karen Shenton-Stone] and her willingness to work with the honorary police to get them out there. We are also looking at IT solutions such as installing webcams out there to monitor people and wildlife. ‘The webcams – CCTV, if you like – would be powered by solar panels. The issue there has been stuff stolen out there in the past. I think Jersey Met had some equipment stolen.

‘There have been some bad incidents of anti-social behaviour and arguments over moorings and other things.’

Deputy Young said he had heard stories of seals injuring themselves on rocks because they became too distressed when tourist boats come close. He said he had asked officers within his department to look at licensing schemes to ensure only regulated operators could take visitors to the reef.

Tour operator Jersey Seafaris has said it would back the introduction of permits.

And Deputy Kirsten Morel, who lodged a question with the Environment Minister last week about protections at the Ecréhous, has said he would like to see a limit on the number of visitors who could travel their each day.

Estimates from environmentalists suggest that on a busy day in the summer up to 200 boats carrying hundreds of passengers could visit.

Deputy Morel said a system could be introduced whereby a set number of permits – for private and tour visitors – would be available per day on a first-come, first-served basis.

The Ecréhous are a Ramsar site and part of the Jersey National Park. The Island's Wildlife Law is being updated, which government officials say will give wildlife greater protection. It is due to be introduced before the end of the year.

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