

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT
BY DEPUTY R.J. WARD OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 12th MAY 2020**

Question

Will the Minister advise –

- (a) whether funds from the Climate Emergency Fund (C.E.F.) are currently being used to address the financial implications arising from the Covid-19 outbreak; and
- (b) what actions, if any, will be taken to use the C.E.F. to enable and support a sustainable economic recovery following the Covid-19 outbreak?

Answer

I have recently updated the Council of Ministers on the situation with regards to the carbon neutral workstream and have their support to continue our carbon neutral journey. The impact of COVID-19 has meant that we have had to reassess the delivery timeline for 2020, but recognise that the current situation and protection of public health is the priority for all of us at the current time.

My commitment and resolve in tackling climate emergency has in no way diminished during the pandemic. However, the incidence of the pandemic has affected the carbon neutral workstream both logistically and strategically. It has not been possible to run the Citizens Assembly during the crisis. This is fundamental to the development of the Long-term Climate Action Plan, so we have made contingency plans and, depending on timing of the safe exit strategy, we will restart this process when the time is right and it is safe for us to do so.

Policy staffing resources aligned to the delivery of the Carbon Neutral Strategy are currently redeployed to support the public health response to COVID-19. This is expected to remain the case for near-term and we are all having to adjust our ways of working and delivery plans.

Specifically, in reference to part a, I can assure the Deputy that the Climate Emergency Fund remains as agreed in the Government Plan in December 2019¹. The terms of reference for the Fund are set out in the interim response to the climate emergency which was agreed by the Assembly in July 2019².

Whilst the fund is constituted by States decision, it is not yet fully operational. The Government Plan allocated £2m to be credited to the fund in 2020. This represented the forecast from raise from fuel duty this year. If the £2M needs to be adjusted to account for the reduced levels of achievement in fuel sales as a result of the lockdown and consequent reduced travel, this will need to be subject to a further States decision in a revised Government Plan. The government plan allocated funds from the climate emergency fund for expenditure in 2020 as set out in CSP5-1-1³ and these remain in place, although delivery dates will be adjusted. Additional expenditure from the Climate Emergency Fund will need to be agreed through the

¹ <https://www.gov.je/SiteCollectionDocuments/Government%20and%20administration/ID%20Government%20Plan%202020-23%20VB.pdf>

²

<https://www.gov.je/SiteCollectionDocuments/Environment%20and%20greener%20living/R%20Tackling%20the%20Climate%20Emergency%20Your%20Island%20Your%20Say%20HL.pdf>

³ https://statesassembly.gov.je/assemblyreports/2019/r.91-2019.pdf?_ga=2.248462151.1198721505.1584350253-837255368.1583764310

government plan process or through specific amendments agreed by the Assembly as set out in the States agreed terms of reference for the fund.

In response to part b, the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from reduced transport is welcomed as an indication of our communities potential and longer lasting behaviour change to address the climate emergency. I very much welcome this response and our communities support for the mitigation measures introduced to reduce transmission of COVID-19 and to protect lives. I very much hope we can build on this reduction in emissions as we recover from the impact of the pandemic.

The strategic context of the carbon neutral agenda will change. As a result of COVID, the Island will need to respond to a changed set of priorities which recognise the importance of the climate emergency.

Our work programme has currently been paused during the period of lockdown and COM have endorsed this decision. Now that a phased post-virus recovery has been announced, it is unlikely to be practical to re-start the work programme until after the summer at the earliest.

The first step will be to convene the citizen's assembly, potentially no sooner than September. This would delay the lodging of the Long-Term Climate Action Plan until at least Summer 2021.

COM have recognised the slowdown in our delivery timetable and agreed to endorse the roll over un-spent capital expenditure into 2021⁴.

As Minister, I do not believe we can afford to be any less committed to tackling climate change. In my opinion humanity finds itself in the grip of the global pandemic in part because of an imbalance between human populations and natural eco-systems. A post-virus resumption of unsustainable behaviours and lifestyles would miss the unexpected chance to make global changes that this momentous time presents. I fully endorse the many commentators and members of the public who have begun to think about how we can build a more sustainable, in all meanings of that word, future.

It is my intention to understand how we can apply the principles and lessons of the EU Green Deal, which a number of European Member States have already put at the centre of the economic response to COVID-19⁵, to our local recovery plan. The Green Deal constitutes a new growth strategy, which is able to deliver on the twin benefits of stimulating economies and creating jobs while accelerating the green transition. Additionally, it is important to recognise that post-Brexit, maintaining a focus on environmental standards and ambition in line with trading partners in future trading agreements will be important.

Old habits are hard to break – but this experience does show us that we can adapt quickly and make significant changes in response to emergency situations. The way people have come together, forming new ways of working and collaborating will help us all to think about how we can work together to achieve carbon neutrality and change old travel patterns.

I believe tackling the climate emergency post-virus can be entirely in line with broader objectives for economic stimulus, consolidating behaviour change and embracing our communities hopes for a new type of future that can and should look different. The focus of the citizens assembly will therefore be achieving a carbon neutral future in the context of the recovery from the pandemic.

⁴ Rolling over unspent capital is implicit in the Terms of Reference of the Fund

⁵ <https://www.climatechangenews.com/2020/04/20/four-eu-nations-back-green-post-coronavirus-recovery/>