

21.01.19

**5 Deputy K.F. Morel of the Minister for the Environment regarding clusters of P.F.A.S. related illnesses (OQ.1/2021):**

Will the Minister advise the Assembly if any research or studies have taken place to identify whether there are any clusters of P.F.A.S. (perfluoroalkyl substances) related illnesses or conditions within the P.F.A.S. plume area, the wider St. Ouen's Bay area or the Island as a whole?

**Deputy J.H. Young of St. Brelade (The Minister for the Environment):**

I am not aware of any research or studies that have been undertaken into the subject that the Deputy has questioned. The information that I am aware of has been set out in 2 reports, which I published, of the technical work. One of those was published in July 2019 and the second one, the most recent one, in November this year. The recommendations in that report are being followed up. The report does give the advice received by that group from the medical officer of health on the question of health aspects.

**10.5.1 Deputy K.F. Morel:**

Ordinarily is it the view of the Minister that when people complain of health impacts due to the possibility of pollution, would the Minister for the Environment ordinarily feel that it would be right to investigate such complaints?

**Deputy J.H. Young:**

Yes, I think it is a sad fact that our environment does get contaminated in all sorts of ways and obviously what one does in environmental regulation is to set in place rules, laws to regulate the levels of those contaminants and have efficient monitoring and following-up processes in place and where it is possible to remove those. Sadly, in the case of this particular subject of P.F.A.S., what we have is material which is ubiquitous in the world; it is being used in manufacturing in all sorts of ways. The expert advice available from Australia, from Canada and U.S. (United States), who obviously have got a big resource into this, have concluded that that cannot be done; they cannot be eliminated. But, nonetheless, the standards are set and what we are trying to do is to have a follow-up work to make sure that we can remediate and get those levels down. In the meantime, the advice to people with private drinking water, there are 3,500 households in this Island, where they are everywhere, is to have your water tested and that is what we have put in place.

**10.5.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Does the Minister believe that the organisation we have, such as an independent environment agency, which looks into issues like this, is adequate on the Island or would he like to see a further development of the independence of environmental investigation on the Island, which then reports back to himself and Government on issues such as these?

**Deputy J.H. Young:**

I think the Deputy does have a point. What I am trying to do is to be absolutely as open as possible and publish all of the results of the monitoring. I think it is not just in the case of P.F.A.S, it is sad but it is true, we have agricultural chemicals and very high levels of nitrate and those levels, we have been reporting on those. At the moment our focus has been to work with Jersey Water, who are as absolutely determined as we are in the Government to make sure that we remove any pollutants and manage them. But, yes, I think there is merit in the Deputy's suggestion that I would like to see

this develop in the future so that we can have a more robust system in place. Resources, I am afraid, are key to this and that will need more resources.

**10.5.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Can I ask the Minister whether he would commit to developing such an agency perhaps for the 2022 Government Plan, seeing as the 2021 has now been agreed?

**Deputy J.H. Young:**

I have had a lot of discussion with the officers and I think all of the team. We have got tremendous expertise but we are limited and the task is big. I have challenged the officers to bring forward as part of the Government Plan this year, 2021, for actions in 2022. I have to be frank and say I doubt very much whether with the time I have left in this term, the Island Plan is a priority, carbon neutral is a priority, I think it is unlikely that one would be able to set out a proposal worked up for such a new structure. But, nonetheless, I think there is a work stream there and I will look at it but I do not think I could give a promise that that would be achieved in that timescale. I think this is one for the new Assembly.

**10.5.4 Deputy K.F. Morel:**

In his answer to Deputy Ward the Minister said that he was being as open as possible, implying, therefore, that he is not able to be completely open. Would he explain what the constraints are on him preventing him from being fully open on this matter?

**Deputy J.H. Young:**

Okay. It is true that there are situations where I have been asked to make decisions, not to the derogations, I have not been asked for derogations to allow but I have been party to discussions when arguments are put, that we would allow materials into our environment which I would not wish that to be the case, and I have maintained as strong a line as possible. But, of course, as politicians, those are the judgments we have to make. While I am in office those are the judgments I make that I will not permit those things. But, of course, a future Government, future term, I am afraid Members holding this regulatory responsibility are having to make those judgments and the word is often used, which I do not like, we need to find a balance; that is something I really do not welcome.