

2018.07.10

3.16 Deputy R.J. Ward of the Minister for the Environment regarding the support available for businesses undertaking green initiatives: [OQ. 93/2018]

What support, if any, is available for businesses who undertake green initiatives, such as compostable coffee cups?

Deputy J.H. Young (The Minister for the Environment):

I thank the Deputy for an excellent question. I will try and focus the answer on the specifics. The department has run, for 9 years, a very successful, but a low-budget, eco-active programme. That is thought successful, as 100 local businesses participate in it, to improve their performance. Those accredited businesses can get free training provided by the department and specialist support. Becoming part of that programme they join a network of organisations that, in fact, benefit together; recent events, training sessions and briefings on plastic waste and sourcing alternative solutions. The department sees this very much as a win/win. The Island gets environmental benefits and obviously the businesses concerned gain in reputation and efficiency and ultimate savings. On this particular, that the Deputy mentioned, compostable coffee cups, that programme, and the prison are working together to investigate a trial with businesses who use compostable kitchen consumables. There are complications with that, technical complications, but the aim will be for that trial to establish how items like such compostable cups can be composted effectively and extended more widely. I must mention, the Minister for Infrastructure has mentioned already the importance of the plastic-free Jersey campaign where Jersey and the eco-active team are seeking to win the recognition of this nationally-recognised programme, which is done by the Surfers Against Sewage. I am hopeful that, by the autumn of this year, the very extensive criteria that the Island will be able to endorse that and then that is all the small parts of the programme. It is about the strategy of that team ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

I must ask you to bring that answer to a close. The normal time allocated for an answer from a Minister is one minute 30 seconds and you were just about at 2 minutes there. Supplemental question?

3.16.1 Deputy R.J. Ward:

I recognise the good work that the eco-active team and the project team take on. The issue is a very simple one: companies are investing more money and spending more money on compostable cups and there is nowhere to take them, because they will not be accepted at the green waste site. Is it not a simple solution just to make a space at the green waste site so they can simply be composted?

Deputy J.H. Young:

Yes, I think this does require further work by my department and the Infrastructure Department. I think it is an open secret that I think that waste management cannot be done separately by our department and we need changes there. I think very much I should be working with the Minister for Infrastructure and so will my team to try and achieve solutions to these practical problems. In the meantime, what we are trying to do is to persuade people to change their behaviours and they will need further support, no question.

3.16.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

I hope the Minister will take the opportunity to reinforce the message about reducing and re-using before, of course, the third 'r' of recycling comes into play. Does he believe that, fundamentally, what needs to happen here is for monetisation and for the ownership of plastic waste, or other types of

waste, to be taken by those who import it and who sell it? For example, if we were to all leave our packaging at the shop at the point of purchase and say: "There you go, you can have all that", or bring it back to the shop, does he think that would facilitate, or catalyse, a type of change in behaviour that might otherwise take a longer time to achieve?

Deputy J.H. Young:

My personal opinion is, in principle, we do need to be prepared as we develop policy for using financial measures to encourage behaviour. But I think it is important that anything we do is co-ordinated with other jurisdictions. At the British-Irish Council, a conference I attended, the U.K. are actively working on this. We are consumers, so we are not in control of our own destiny. But, very much, we are going to meet again and bring back co-ordinated programmes between jurisdictions and that may involve, if that is in accordance with, such programmes. In principle, I would not rule them out.

3.16.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

May I have a timescale on the facility being produced for compostable material, so I can go back to the businesses that I have been speaking to and say: "This is the time you are looking at, before you can undertake what you want to do on that."? Otherwise, they may well stop this really positive initiative.

Deputy J.H. Young:

I have not got that information to hand. I undertake to get back to the Deputy and circulate that information, if that is acceptable.