

22.10.04

3 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of the Minister for the Environment regarding reaching net-zero carbon emissions (OQ.96/2022)

Will the Minister state whether he supports the continuation of the target set by the previous Government of Jersey of reaching net-zero carbon emissions by 2050; if not, will he indicate whether he intends to bring this target forward?

Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade (The Minister for the Environment):

Thank you very much for the question. The Deputy will not be surprised to hear that I am fully committed to the carbon neutral roadmap and its ambition to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as part of the Island's international obligations under the Paris Agreement. Matching the U.K.'s (United Kingdom) target of a 68 per cent reduction of 1990 levels of emissions by 2030 and 78 per cent by 2035 and net zero by 2050 is an ambitious target, particularly when you consider that so far we have taken 30 years to achieve a 46 per cent reduction. The carbon neutral roadmap details the need to secure a long-term financing strategy in order to achieve this level of ambition, and until that funding is secured I do not believe it is prudent to commit to a faster pace of emissions reductions.

2.3.1 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Does the Minister accept the prevailing scientific consensus which has developed since the Paris climate agreement that in fact 2050 is too late? If he does accept that prevailing scientific consensus would he agree that Jersey ought to bring its target forward as well?

Deputy J. Renouf:

I would accept the scientific consensus that says that the sooner we can reach our net zero target the better. 2050 is the last date by which we would attempt to reach it. If we can bring it forward from that we will. Certainly I will be driving as ambitious an agenda as possible. I would also say that I am highly mindful of the need to bring the people of Jersey with us on this journey. It is a long-term strategy. We need to build and maintain support and indeed within this Assembly. I think it has been one of the strengths of our journey so far that the Assembly has maintained a high level of unity in this area. I would seek to maintain that unity while moving as fast as possible.

[10:00]

2.3.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Should 2050 become economically difficult would the Minister suggest that we move from 2050 as well?

Deputy J. Renouf:

No.

2.3.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Subsequently, how are we going to assure that 2050 is a targetable date and economically viable when 2030 is not? It is not a question of will and leading the way. Are we not missing an opportunity for Jersey to lead the way across the world, regardless of our small size?

Deputy J. Renouf:

Yes, I think I have indicated my desire to move as fast as possible and I do believe and share the Deputy's ambition that we should be leaders in this and we have the opportunity to do so. I am

trying to hold 2 things here equally. One is my desire to move forward as an Island together, winning arguments, maintaining support and, on the other hand, drive forward with as much ambition as possible. I detect no lack of ambition around the Council of Ministers' table to achieve our ambitions and I am proud to represent our goal in that regard. I am convinced that we will bring forward that strategy in the timely manner that we need to.

2.3.4 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

As time moves forward the 2050 target date will lose credibility because of that prevailing scientific consensus, so does the Minister not agree it would be a good idea to get ahead of that and actually establish an earlier target before any future international climate agreements are reached? Would you put that 2050 target aside because it is inadequate?

Deputy J. Renouf:

As I indicated in my first answer, I think the key thing here is that we can set any target we want but unless we have a credible strategy for getting there, including a financing strategy, it is really just words. I would much rather move forward with a commitment that we know we can keep, which means developing the financing strategy first. Once we have done that and we have a clear idea of how we can achieve an ambitious target then I will be very happy to move forward, potentially bringing the 2050 target forward, if we know that we can actually achieve it.