

2025.05.13

2.9 Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity of the Minister for the Environment regarding an update on the timeline for the offshore wind workstream (OQ.106/2025):

Will the Minister provide an update on the timeline for the offshore wind workstream, including a target debate date for the draft consenting legislation, and the anticipated timeframe for a further States debate on the strategic options and commercial leasing process?

Deputy S.G. Luce of Grouville and St. Martin (The Minister for the Environment):

Work is progressing well on the development of policy and legislation to set in place a process to lease, consent, regulate and decommission an offshore windfarm. I have instructed officers to prepare 2 documents. The first, a draft law, which would establish a framework for consenting the construction, operation and decommissioning of offshore energy installations, including offshore wind. The second document will be a proposition that sets out my proposed approach to identifying and securing, facilitating and opening of a formal leasing process once relevant legislation and processes are in place. As I have previously said in this Assembly, it is my aim to present both these papers here to Members during the autumn and debate the proposals and legislation before the end of this year. The proposal that I will bring forward will include the strategic drivers for such a project and the benefits case for the Island, taking into account likely market conditions.

2.9.1 Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I am glad to hear the Minister is saying that he anticipates autumn to present to us the papers and debate before the end of the year. The Assembly, of course, has a lot of potential legislation coming forward for the end of the year. There are a lot of things happening in autumn. Could the Minister outline what he sees as the potential consequences of any significant delays to Jersey's offshore wind infrastructure programme if we are not able to debate it before the end of this term?

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I have made it very clear to officers some months ago now that I wanted the debate on offshore wind to happen this year because I realise that there will always be the inevitable backlog of papers coming to this Assembly before we go into purdah. I really do not want to have the offshore wind debate in 2026. It will be far too close to the election. I have made it, as I said, absolutely clear to officers that I wanted this legislation, the draft law and the proposition to come to the Assembly during this year. I cannot be clearer than that with the Deputy.

2.9.2 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

Does the Minister have the full support - unanimous support - of the Council of Ministers to proceed with the scoping and preliminary work for the windfarm, including the legislation?

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I believe I do have that support, inasmuch as I have the full support of the Assembly to move forward as I am currently doing. As I said, I will come back to this Assembly by the end of this year with the best option. The best option may be that we do not proceed. We will have a look at all the different alternatives and the best option will come back here to be debated. A decision has been taken to move forward to the next stage. That decision, the main decision, will be taken at the end of this year as to whether we move forward further. We have these steps in the right place at the right time. If we get to the end of the year and we do not proceed, we will not have spent years at work and millions and millions of pounds worth of money proceeding to something which would be rejected at some time in the future, but we will have done enough work to inform the Assembly that moving forward is the right thing to do.

2.9.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

Ultimately the decision about moving forward will depend on the fine detail of the windfarm and who benefits from it, essentially. Does the Minister agree that it would not necessarily be the worst thing in the world if this legislation were to come back after the next election, so that the Members who are seeking re-election or new candidates for this Assembly could seek a fresh mandate and therefore a fresh decision for the windfarm from the public, including what any new windfarm would look like in reality?

Deputy S.G. Luce:

We have had one debate in this Assembly on the subject of an offshore windfarm and unanimously this Assembly voted in favour of moving forward. I want to use that enthusiasm to make sure that the next decision is taken by the same Government. If we decide to move forward and the next Government, sometime later next year, decide that is not the way they want to move, they will have it within their remit to change that decision. The ultimate decision to sign up to somebody to move forward ultimately will not be taken at the end of this year, but a decision to move to the next stage, where we know the costs, we know the type of development we might wish to do, will have been done. Ultimately, the end of this year will be a really important decision, but it will not be a signature on a piece of paper that commits. There will be a point at some time in the future, if we decide to move forward, where we will have to sign one way or the other and that will commit future Governments, because no developer is going to sink millions of pounds into a development knowing that the decision might be changed. So at some time that important decision will have to be taken. We are getting closer, but we are not there yet.

2.9.4 Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade:

Does the Minister accept that a certain amount of speed is necessary because, for example, is he concerned that French plans to build their own windfarm to the west of St. Ouen's Bay may mean that Jersey's potential windfarm gets crowded out, to an extent, by the wind shadow and other considerations that apply if you have a lot of windfarms in one small area?

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Yes, I cannot agree more. The danger with projects like windfarms, which will take at least 10 years, probably longer, if we were to make the decision this year, is that because it is such a long project one does not tend to address the urgency, which the Deputy quite rightly brings. Yes, we know the French Government have a lot of aspiration for additional windfarms to the west of the Island and, yes, we know about the potential shadowing effect that windfarms can have for others. That is all going to have to be discussed with the French Government as we move forward, if we move forward at all. The Deputy is absolutely right, this is a long-term project, but I address it urgently and I want another decision by this same Assembly before we get to the next election.

[11:30]

2.9.5 Deputy J. Renouf:

In light of the need for action, can he confirm that there remains private sector interest in a Jersey windfarm? Can he confirm that one of the options under consideration remains landing power from the windfarm in Jersey?

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Yes, I can confirm there are a number of commercial entities interested in the Jersey opportunity at this time. I remain positive that there are options for the Island should we wish to proceed to the leasing round.

2.9.6 Deputy H.L. Jeune:

We had a discussion earlier about whether it is useful to engage with stakeholders during the iteration of such legislation or whether to have it at the moment of debate. I am wondering if the Minister feels, like myself, that having a void in the national debate, because we are having a long time between the last debate in the States Assembly and potentially when these 2 proposals will be put forward by the Minister, if there needs to be more discussion around windfarm and more of a debate to help ... so there

is not a void and not misunderstanding being discussed around a potential windfarm, from not only an infrastructure perspective but also for an economic opportunity as well for Jersey into the future and start to be coming part of the debate about the future economic opportunity for Jersey, and if he could start pushing that debate more in the next few months?

Deputy S.G. Luce:

We have a Windfarm Review Panel, as the Deputy well knows, and they have an ability to ask questions, which they are doing. Officers of mine are meeting with them on a regular basis and we are updating them. I take the Deputy's point on board about more discussion. What I say to her is that at the moment we have experts looking at the subject and coming back with the alternative, coming back with the detailed answers that we would need to answer those questions that we may well get into discussion, if we were to broaden the discussion in the next couple of months. I say to the Deputy, I take her view on board but let us wait for this expert report to come back with the various options, having been looked at in detail, to show us how we might or might not proceed. At that point, we can have a discussion. A proposition will be put to the Assembly. It can be amended. I hope it will not be. There will be a proposition. There will be a proposed law. The law will stand us in good stead, because it could be used in future times for other sustainable energy inside our territorial waters, tidal maybe. The law is being written very specifically not for just a windfarm. It is being written specifically for all sustainable energy from or in our waters. Let us wait for the detail. Let us discuss the detail. Let us get back here and have the discussion by the end of the year.