3.7 The Connétable of Grouville of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the use of fuel oil in the Energy from Waste plant: [9666]

Is any type of fuel oil used in the Energy from Waste plant and, if so, why? Will the Minister confirm that no type of fuel oil is needed in the day-to-day running of the plant?

Deputy E.J. Noel (The Minister for Infrastructure):

Diesel fuel oil is used in the Energy from Waste plant for 2 purposes. The primary purpose is for the fuel to start the incinerator process and in order to do this it is necessary to heat up the combustion chamber before waste is introduced. This is to ensure that the emission limits will be met when the waste is burned. Burning fuel on the start-up is quite normal for Energy from Waste plants and it is a requirement of the Waste Incineration Directive (2000/76/EC), which is a standard to which the plant is regulated under the waste management licence.

[10:30]

The plant operates on a 24-hour 7- days a week basis, so once the plant is started it will run for some considerable time, often months, before it requires shut down again. The secondary function for the diesel fuel oil is to temporarily boost the combustion chamber temperature in the event of a particularly low calorific value or wet waste being processed by the plant. This secondary fuel is rarely used and the majority of the time the waste alone will support the combustion and maintenance at the required temperatures. I am happy to invite any States Members to come to witness the plant in action and how it is operated and maintained. I would suggest that such a visit comes just before the plant is being shut down for one of its scheduled maintenance programmes and again when we restart the plant.

3.7.1 The Connétable of St. Grouville:

My microphone is a bit temperamental, like other people's I think. If diesel oil is required during the running of the plant when the material is damp, would it not be beneficial to put some of the cardboard that is at the moment being recycled into the plant, rather than putting in another fuel?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

Yes. As I mentioned, if wet waste, for example, is fed into the incinerator and there was a drop in the combustion chamber, the burns will automatically start and run for a short period of time until the furnace temperature is stabilised. This is quite a rare event and it covers a short period of time. But to answer the question about putting cardboard into the incinerator, we currently produce some 2,800 tonnes of cardboard recycling per annum and it costs our department some £100,000 to do so. This is a far better option than us just burning the cardboard in the incinerator where we have a typical cost of some £100 per tonne, so it would be some 2.8 times as much to burn it as it does to recycle it.

3.7.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Would the Minister be able to publish the amount of diesel that is used over a period of a year, so we can see the fluctuations? I think that that is the first question.

Deputy E.J. Noel:

In 2013 we used some 146,000 litres of fuel oil. In 2014 we used some 160,000 litres of fuel oil. The most recent figures that I have is for 2015, we used some 123,000 litres of fuel oil.

3.7.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

When we talk about the Energy from Waste plant having a certain output in terms of electricity, whatever percentage that is, and perhaps the Minister can clarify that, is that offset against the tons of diesel that we burn in order to keep the Energy from Waste running? Will he be able to say what the net product of energy is coming out of the harnessable energy that we get from that and whether in fact it is negative or positive? I appreciate the Minister might not have that information available now but would he also endeavour to make sure that is published for transparency purposes?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I believe, from memory, the Energy from Waste plant is capable of producing and does produce up to 9 per cent of the Island's electricity uses but that is not its primary aim. Its primary aim is to dispose of our rubbish.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I appreciate that but a supplementary, surely …

The Deputy Bailiff:

I am sorry, Deputy, that is a second supplementary. Very well, I will give you the further supplementary as no one else is indicating.

3.7.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

I think the point I am getting at … I appreciate though it is not the sole purpose of the Energy from Waste plant but, of course, there are no doubt many tensions when it comes to the desire for recycling on one side and getting burnables into the incinerator so that we do not have to use an increasing amount of diesel. But is it not the case that if we were simply to use that amount of diesel to generate electricity without the Energy from Waste plant it might exceed that 9 per cent or at least it would be useful to have those statistics for comparison purposes?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

No, Deputy Tadier's conclusion is not correct and I invite him again, as I do any Members, to come and understand how the plant works. It is a very complex piece of kit. The electricity generated from it, although we do not get as much of that electricity as we would like from our Jersey Electricity Company, does produce up to 9 per cent of the Island's electricity needs. But, more importantly, we dispose of our waste in a compliant way with regulations. We need to also do our bit in terms of improving the environment and getting our recycling rates up.

3.7.5 The Connétable of Grouville:

I think the Minister said it cost £290 a tonne to put waste through the Energy from Waste plant and I understand that the problem there is the amount of unsuitable material that is going through the plant. If we could reduce that amount of unsuitable material or eliminate it altogether perhaps, how much would that cost come down?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

Typically it costs £100 per tonne to process waste through the Energy from Waste plant. If we, for example, added cardboard back into that stream, one, it would not be the right thing to do for our environment. But the cardboard, that costs us to recycle £35 a tonne and if we were to burn it in the Energy from Waste plant would cost £100 per tonne. It is financially beneficial to recycle our cardboard but it is also beneficial for our environment.