

4.6 Deputy M. Tadier of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the proposed energy efficiency of the new Les Quennevais School: [1(5520)]

Will the new Les Quennevais School building include photovoltaic panels and if not, why not; and what level of recognised energy efficiency standard will the new school be built to?

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

I am a little surprised that Deputy Tadier has asked this question because under our Standing Orders information that is already in the public domain should not form part of questions. I say this because this information is included in the planning application for Les Quennevais School in a design and access statement which is section 9.8 on page 26. If the Deputy had done his homework and had looked at the planning application, he would see that an extensive review of the energy options has been undertaken for the new school. The planning application sets out the energy strategy which includes photovoltaics on the roof, along with solar and heat source pumps. Members will also wish to note that the planning officer report recommending acceptance of the current scheme has been added recently to the Planning website. The project is being assessed by B.R.E.E.A.M. which considers energy efficiency among other assessment criteria. The design has been assessed as ‘Very Good’ based on the U.K. standards. The scheme will of course comply with all relevant bylaw requirements. The design team are fully aware of the need to conserve energy and are working closely with all agencies to ensure that the building achieves the highest possible standards within the budget constraints. The proposed energy solution reflects both the environmental performance and the cost in use.

4.6.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

It is funny we are talking about Les Quennevais School because I feel like I am back at school with the Minister, being told that I have not done my homework, it is like a bad dream, but I thank the Minister for his answers. Now does this mean that the department has learnt its lesson? Because I have been told by sources in the Environment Department that when it came to changing the boiler at Les Quennevais Sports Centre, for example, which is used by Les Quennevais School and the public, they replaced one inefficient boiler with another inefficient form of technology, I think it is oil, because it was cheaper to replace it. But in the long term we were told by the Environment officer that it is a false economy because not only is it more carbon-polluting but it is less economic in the long term. Is there a joined-up plan when it comes to building maintenance and building new public buildings from the Property Holdings Department or does it just depend on who has any particular input at any one time?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

There is a long-term plan and we implement it. I do take issue; I wish the Deputy would contact the people who are the experts and know about these things because the boilers that were replaced at the Les Quennevais swimming pool were efficient oil boilers and that is because the costs of switching to a carbon-neutral solution, which is electricity, was too expensive. So you have to in the round look at ongoing running costs which hits directly the budget of the provider of that service which was what was Education, Sport and Culture; it is now part of Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture. You have to look at the whole-life costs of an installation. I do send out the invitation again to Deputy Tadier and to his colleagues: come in and speak to my officers at Property Holdings who are the experts. If they do not have expert knowledge on a particular area, they acquire that knowledge from experts as opposed to listen to, may I say, tittle-tattle or uninformed remarks.

[10:45]

4.6.2 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Will presumably the Infrastructure Department produce a cost-benefit analysis and the whole-life cost of using solar panels?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

Is the Senator referring to this particular question which is to do with Les Quennevais School or in general?

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

No, with reference to Les Quennevais School. If you are going to put a more expensive heating system in or electric system in, then you should be doing a cost-benefit analysis.

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I refer the Senator again to the detailed application which has that information in it. We have the whole-energy strategy and plan for the life of the school and she will find that information there. But again I extend the same invitation to Senator Ferguson to come in and speak to officers who are the experts on this matter. I am a mere politician and an accountant; I am not a heating engineer.

4.6.3 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

A supplementary? Does this mean you do have chartered engineers working in your department?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

Absolutely. D.f.I. (Department for Infrastructure) is full of highly-qualified engineers, as the Senator should well know.

4.6.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

I am glad to hear we have got a team of experts working on the job because I would hate to have to rely on the Minister. The Minister talks shorthand to us when he said the cost of oil in the case of the sports centre was cheaper. Not cheaper in the long run. If you take the lifetime cost of the alternative, it was far cheaper in the long term. Yet again, does the Minister not agree his department was looking at the short term and not the long term?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

No, I am afraid the Deputy is wrong. He needs to come and get educated. He needs to come and speak to the experts and I am willing for him to meet with the experts because we do look at the whole-life costs of these installations.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I have been in to talk to the experts and that is what they told me.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Was that a question, Deputy?

Deputy G.P. Southern:

No, Sir.

The Deputy Bailiff:

All right.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I apologise for making a statement.

4.6.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

I am reassured, and I am sure we are all reassured, that the new Les Quennevais School will be built to decent environmental standards. It is our hope that this exchange has highlighted the fact that there are discrepancies from what experts in the Environment Department might tell one States Member and what the budget constraints I believe that the Property Holdings in some cases have been working under, short-term capital budget constraints, which do not take into account the lifetime cost of any projects and it is that that needs to be addressed. So will the Minister, perhaps in a spirit of conciliation, accept that there is greater co-working that can be done in departments and that we do need to move towards lifetime costing of projects and not simply the current way that budget constraints might apply?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

We do consider the lifetime costs of any building that we build and the way we heat it and the energy usage, primarily in the design and construction to reduce the amount of energy in the first place, so I do take issue with what the Deputy has said. Again, I repeat, please come in and speak to those building experts that will be able to give you the evidence that we do exactly as he is asking us to do.