

23.12.11.

**11. Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée of St. Helier South of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding a ban on plastic bags (OQ.248/2023)**

Regarding the Single-Use Plastics etc. (Restrictions) (Jersey) Law 2021, will the Minister advise whether consideration has been given to a total ban of plastic bags, and if not, why not?

Deputy T. Binet of St. Saviour (The Minister for Infrastructure):

I thank the Deputy for her question. Before I start, I would just like to explain that I am not able to be present this morning just due to COVID isolation. I would like to offer my apologies to not be able to be there to answer the Deputy's question directly. Returning to the question; it was before my time, but I understand that consideration was given to a total ban on plastic bags while the legislation was being developed. Those at the time did a lot of research with other jurisdictions and elsewhere in the world, and they consulted locally with retailers to learn a little bit about what sort of bags were in use and what they were used for. It quickly became clear that if they banned every type of bag it was going to cause a lot of problems, not least for uses like bin liners and less savoury uses like cleaning up after dogs and disposing of nappies. A decision was taken to exclude certain types of bags from the legislation, certainly in the first instance. This was intended to make the whole thing workable. I think without those exceptions we would have found life pretty difficult. So that is why we are where we are.

2.8.1 Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

The principle of the restriction on plastic law has not been fit for purpose. The idea was to stop the circulation of single plastic use. As I am aware, it is still available in every single shop you go to. But the difference is now the consumer is paying for it. Does the Minister agree that this law has gone wrong somehow and really needs immediate attention possibly?

Deputy T. Binet:

Unfortunately, I cannot agree with the Deputy that the legislation has gone wrong. To be honest with you, I do not know what the figures are. But as a person who shops regularly themselves, I see an awful lot more people taking reusable bags to do their shopping. I think it has had a pretty profound effect. That would be my unqualified view of it at the moment. I am perfectly happy to take another look at this, and it is a shame that the Deputy had not contacted me in the first instance, because we could have sat down and taken a look at it together, and I would invite the Deputy to stay in touch with me on the matter because obviously she has a particular concern, and I am very happy to look at it.

2.8.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the Minister agree that plastic bags are not the only type of single use plastic that are an issue in Jersey? Does he agree that one area to look into might be making those who import and sell single use plastics - one might think of cucumbers wrapped in clingfilm or courgettes that are wrapped in other packaging when they could be sold loose loosely - should be made both financially and morally responsible for the cost and the practicality of their disposal?

Deputy T. Binet:

I think the Deputy makes a very good point. As I say, I am a shopper myself and I notice these sort of things and they irritate me. I come from a background of dealing with retailers for a long period of time and when you consider the fact that we are supplied, in the main, by U.K. retailers, I have to say it would be very difficult for them to make specific ... in fact, it would be impossible for them to make specific arrangements with things that are so systemised in order to service Jersey's needs. Save for

the items that get packed locally in plastic, I think we have very little control over that, much as I might like to see some of those things changed.

#### 2.8.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

Although I am younger than the Deputy and the Minister, I remember a time when one could take bottles back and get a 5 pence or 10 pence refund. Does the Minister think that maybe we should look to the past and try and put an inherent value on packaging, particularly when it is cans/bottles and incentivise, with carrot or stick, the return of packaging so that if you buy a can of fizzy drink from the shop or soft drink, you can then return it to the shop and you get some money back for your packaging.

#### Deputy T. Binet:

I think I would have to refer the Deputy to my previous answer. A lot of these things are very desirable but in the real world they are not terribly achievable. We are looking at improving our recycling on the Island, in any event. We are coming up with a package of measures, hopefully, during the course of next year. But there are limitations. I am certainly happy to take lead in areas where we can do something. But I make the point, again, that when you are supplied by U.K. retailers where everything ... the supply chain is exceptionally systemised, it really is a difficult thing to do.

#### The Bailiff:

Just to remind, Members, the question is about single use plastic bags and not more generally, recycling.

#### 2.8.4 Deputy R.J. Ward:

I am so tempted to say I hope the package of measures is not in a plastic package of measures, but there we go. One of the very important points raised by Deputy Porée was the fact that perhaps this law has gone slightly wrong. I will give the Minister an example. If you get a takeaway and support our local restaurants by having a takeaway, you are charged 70 pence for the bag because they have to charge you for the bag in which they put your takeaway. Do you think this is an example where the law has gone wrong, and it is just adding a price for consumers? Where does that money go to?

#### Deputy T. Binet:

The Deputy raises another couple of interesting points, and I will have to raise my hands and say I do not really know where that money goes. There does seem to be something wrong in that regard. Without access to figures as to what sort of money gets collected and how much is involved, it is difficult for me to make any further comment. All I can commit to doing is to looking into it and coming back to the respective Deputies with whatever information I can find out.

#### 2.8.5 Deputy L.J. Farnham:

In relation to alternative types of packaging, will the Minister ensure that applies to t-shirts? I ask because today I received my Reform jersey t-shirt wrapped up in a plastic bag, thank you.

#### The Bailiff:

I am not sure that you have to answer that question.

#### Deputy T. Binet:

No, I take that as a statement, shall I?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

It was a large, I asked for a medium..

2.8.6 Deputy G.P. Southern:

That is now 2 occasions when the Minister has said: "I do not have the numbers." Will the Minister commit himself to getting the numbers so we can have a rational discussion around the extent to which single use plastic bags are in use?

Deputy T. Binet?

I do believe that I committed to doing exactly that. I will say this, it is also going to be a very difficult task because it is going to involve lots of different retailers with lots of different types of bags. At this point, I am not exactly sure how we would capture that information but, as explained, I am certainly happy to have a go at it.

2.8.7 Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

I would like to say it is quite disappointing to hear the Minister say that it is almost impossible to stop the producing of the single-use plastic. That was my question. I have just been recently to Africa, 2 different countries, and the Governments in Kenya and Morocco do not allow for the production of such single-use plastic bags. When we are in a country where we have much more knowledge and ability to stop those things and become more sustainable, to hear that that is not possible is a bit disappointing. But does the Minister agree, at least in principle, that this policy can be improved upon? If so, would the Minister like to meet up with me and carry on this conversation outside the Chamber?

Deputy T. Binet:

I am sorry but I believe I have answered the second 2 parts to those questions. I have already said that I am happy to talk to any Deputies or Constables that are concerned about single use plastic. I have committed to get as much information as I possibly can. As to the Deputy's disappointment, I do not like to disappoint people but I am afraid I live in the real world, as we all do, and like I said, I do know a little bit about supply chains. If we think we are going to persuade people like Waitrose, for example, or Morrisons to stop their supply chain to strip plastic off cucumbers or the sort of plastic that ties 2 boxes of tissues together for Jersey, I am afraid I have to disappoint people. These things are simply not possible, as desirable as they may be.