

23.07.04

**10 Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M Porée of St. Helier South of the Minister for the Environment regarding schemes to encourage move from cars to public transport (OQ. 143/2023)**

In light of the Government e-bike grant and low-carbon heating incentive schemes, intended to support Islanders to move to more environmentally friendly behaviours, will the Minister advise whether he considers similar schemes are required to encourage the move from cars to public transport as the preferred mode of transportation in Jersey; and if so, what does he propose?

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

I thank the Deputy for her question, particularly because it is good to have a chance to talk about how we support environmentally-friendly behaviours, of which the e-bike grant scheme and low-carbon heating incentives are good examples. In terms of whether similar schemes are required to encourage the move from cars to public transport, I would point out that there is much that is already underway. The Government is already incentivising Islanders to use the bus service by supporting the operational costs of the bus service through the operating contract. These payments from the Government to the operator allow the fares that passengers pay to be held significantly below the break-even level that would otherwise have to be charged. The bus service sits within the remit of my colleague, the Minister for Infrastructure, but I am happy to put on record my support in principle for initiatives that enhance the levels of service that encourage new bus users, subject to proper analysis of costs and benefits. So far, I would say that work suggests that rather than cutting fares further, the greatest benefit in terms of a modal shift would be provided by increasing the frequency of services on key routes and targeted introduction of new routes where there is demonstrable need. I would also point out that our policy on sustainable transport is multifaceted and encourages active travel as well as public transport.

**3.10.1 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Given that the bus contract is currently up for negotiation, and in a written question I was not given numbers on how much we spend on the bus company because it is still under negotiation, and the link for Active Travel and our carbon neutral roadmap, has the Minister had any input in contract negotiations in terms of the environmental side of his remit and what he would like to encourage and see happen for our public transport service?

**Deputy J. Renouf:**

Yes, I have had dialogue with officers in the Infrastructure Department and it is true to say that they are very cognisant of the carbon neutral roadmap and the injunction to ... and the sustainable transport strategy and the new contract is being worked on, on the principle that it has to meet those objectives. It is still at a very early stage. Tenders are being invited at the moment. However, it is absolutely the case that those wider aims and ambitions are being built in to the discussions around what that contract should look like.

**3.10.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

One of the reasons that we have the electric bike subsidy and the other subsidy is for the nudge theory, to nudge people towards changing their behaviours. Would the Minister agree that the greatest nudge has been made with the £20 bus pass for a whole generation of young people coming through and moving towards public transport? Would the Minister agree that more is needed in that type of nudge, to change people's behaviours early on?

**Deputy J. Renouf:**

We need to nudge in lots of different directions, which is why I made the comment in my first answer that the policies that we follow in this regard are multifaceted. Buses will certainly be important for lots of people and certainly my son caught the bus home from school yesterday from town, from his first day at a new school, and seemed to have no problem with that and make use of his bus pass. I am well aware of the benefits of that initiative. I would say that we need to nudge in lots of different directions. That includes in terms of people when they are buying cars that we will want to nudge them in the direction of E.V.s (electric vehicles). We will also want to look at whether or not we can incentivise car clubs and similar shared ownership schemes. There are lots of things we can nudge towards. I would encourage a broad approach rather than a narrow focus.

**3.10.3 Deputy T.A. Coles:**

Given that only around 23 per cent of the e-bike lottery vouchers were redeemed from the first round of the lottery, has the Minister considered any alternative distributions of this scheme and, if so, what are they?

**Deputy J. Renouf:**

The question about the success or otherwise of the e-bike incentive, it is worth remembering why we ended up with the lottery. The lottery was a response to the fact that a previous e-bike incentive had been done on a first-come first-served basis and had been massively oversubscribed, and so the money ran out very quickly. There was therefore considerable consumer unhappiness because if you did not happen to get your name down in the first couple of weeks you missed out. The lottery was an attempt to get around that. We are reviewing that because the risk with the lottery is that a lot of people put in speculative bids for e-bikes without necessarily much intention of using it. That may be preventing people who have a definite desire to buy an e-bike, but are not successful in the lottery, from getting their allocation. We are reviewing that.

**3.10.4 Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

Given that the bus contract is currently under tender, could the Minister advise the Assembly about what discussions he has had and what action has been taken between him and the Minister for Infrastructure to ensure that environmental consequences are considered within that tendering process?

**Deputy J. Renouf:**

As I have already said, I have had informal discussions with officers on this. The Minister for Infrastructure and I have talked frequently about the need for more sustainable forms of transport. We are at an early stage in terms of the delivery of that contract. I am assured that it is being conducted in a way that takes account of the relevant policies. I will certainly be following that up as things go further down the road.

**3.10.5 Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

Does the Minister have confidence that the tendering process will, in effect, enable him to meet his objectives as Minister for the Environment and will he undertake to ensure that his conversations with the Minister for Infrastructure enable him to meet his own objectives?

**Deputy J. Renouf:**

I will certainly, as I say, be having plenty more discussions about the contract I am sure with the Minister for Infrastructure and with his team. I am also aware that there are many factors that have

to play into those contract discussions. The environment is certainly a very important one. We also have to think about the route network, in terms of delivering for different sectors of the population and so on. It has an environment objective and other things as well. It is also worth saying that we already do other things relating to that through the Climate Emergency Fund. Members may be aware that there is a certain amount of money set aside in the Climate Emergency Fund to support various activities to do with the bus service. That has been spent on various bus route extensions and using S.G.R.D. (second generation renewable diesel) in some of the bus network and so on. Those discussions about the interaction between infrastructure, the operation of the buses and environmental goals are ongoing and continuous, I would say.

**3.10.6 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Can I be more specific than so far we have seen? What particular nudge is at the top of the priorities of the Minister for the Environment to see through over the next 3 years?

**Deputy J. Renouf:**

I made clear that I would rather have a broader focus than a particular nudge, because we need to incentivise so many different things. It is respectful of the Island's population to acknowledge that people find themselves in different situations and different nudges will work for different people in different situations. Having said that, the question of a nudge in relation to buses, I alluded earlier to the fact that it seems from the work that has been done that increasing route frequency and judicious provision of new routes, where there is proven need, offers the best key, if you like, to unlock changes of behaviour as far as we can see at the moment.