

21.11.23

10 Senator S.Y. Mézec of the Minister for the Environment regarding measures taken to address carbon emissions (OQ.240/2021):

Will the Minister state the tangible measures he has taken since taking office that have led to a direct and measurable impact on the production of carbon emissions in Jersey?

Deputy J.H. Young (The Minister for the Environment):

It is difficult to demonstrate the measure, the causation and correlation of Ministerial decisions and policy setting with a reduction of carbon emissions. In fairness, it is a challenge for all jurisdictions in the world who are on the same journey, because the exact impact of the policy is due to many factors at play and the uptake of the policy and any behavioural change. Generally trends are used as a proxy for how good and effective policies are. Of course, the reality is that those emission trends are impacted by many factors and not just one particular policy. In particular, for example, it is difficult as our current monitoring and measuring is done 2 years behind, which is in line with international practice at the moment, and is based on modelling against what is a business-as-usual technique. I am afraid it is complicated. I am happy to provide a list of all the workstreams, which I am currently leading on behalf of the Council of Ministers, as well as policy decisions on climate change work, in my capacity as a Minister. Because time is limited, I would rather circulate this or reply to a written question. In the meantime, to reassure the Senator, work is very advanced - in fact almost complete - on the carbon neutral policy roadmap, which will be produced for the States to debate early next year. Those and the actions will all be there to quantify detail using those techniques of measurement and so on that I have referred to.

4.10.1 Senator S.Y. Mézec:

That question was an opportunity for the Minister to list achievements and successes in reducing carbon emissions in Jersey and he did not seem to take it up. Can one infer from that that he is unable to raise any particular policy enactments that happened in his time of office that he at least believes may have had an impact on reducing carbon emissions?

Deputy J.H. Young:

Obviously "may have had an impact" is a very different question. What we have done is put a lot of effort into preparing for the climate change work. I have met the president of the Commission online, had discussions about our work with the other Islands. Myself and Deputy Wickenden prepared an education pledge on this, which was shown live at the real COP26 event. We made a webinar with other Islands, including overseas territories in the Caribbean and other societies that have had enormous damage. I was very pleased to be party to that. We have run home energy audit subsidies. We have so far done 649 audits with subsidies totalling £147,150. We have done work on habitats. We have done a lot of science work about blue carbon in our marine system, because while terrestrial carbon fixing is the scope and materiality of the act it is quite limited in our small landmass. Nonetheless, we have a major opportunity to blue carbon in the future within our sea area. That science has been done and it will pay dividends. Also, we have here an environmental outreach with education services that are running car-free days and energy efficiency events. I have attended numerous schools and presented to schools and others. I have had enormous help from the Education team. Of course, building standards are under review as part of the Island Plan. Also, of course, the creation of a £23 million Climate Emergency Fund, which I was happy to support and, in fact, took a strong initiative to do so. If the Senator would like a detailed list, I would be happy to expand and list on that. This is a long-term journey.

4.10.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:

May I ask the Minister: when will a list of actions be made public from the use of the climate fund and who will be deciding on those actions?

Deputy J.H. Young:

That fund, under the terms of reference approved by the States, sits under my Ministry. We have published information of what allocations have already been made. A very large portion of that has gone on the sustainable transport initiative, which was right; early actions there. A lot of work was done on preparation ... the work that I have referred to in the roadmap preparation, which required expert examination. We have had to incur those costs. Those have been done. All that detail will be in the report that we will be publishing. We are on the last draft. I have to take that to the Council of Ministers, because that is the rule. As far as I am concerned, I am aiming at getting this public before we have the Government Plan debate.

4.10.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I just ask the Minister whether the actions and a list of them will be available before the deadline for amendments to the Government Plan?

Deputy J.H. Young:

Procedurally, there is a lot of material already available, which I could provide. I need to check whether I am allowed under the rules of Ministerial code to release that publicly before 30th November. I am not sure if I can do that before then. I am always happy to release it privately to the Deputy, so he has the information.

4.10.4 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Is the Minister aware of calls internationally to tackle climate change with the same urgency as we have tackled COVID-19 and indeed things like terrorism? Is this the attitude that he holds himself and indeed does the Government hold this attitude?

Deputy J.H. Young:

There is no question, the States have decided we have a climate emergency. The whole world knows it is a climate emergency. What we have to do is to make sure that the actions in the plans involve choices. We all know the costs in this work are huge; well beyond the immediate resources. What we have to do is target those resources and build up a plan right through 2030 to 2050. I am very proud of the work done and I thank all the Members who have worked with me and my Assistant Minister in that work as well. There is a priority. I hope I have answered the Deputy's question. If I have not, please come back.

4.10.5 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

What level of extra resourcing will the Minister's department need going forward to treat this as the emergency it is?

Deputy J.H. Young:

When the Deputy sees the carbon neutral roadmap ... at the moment we have £23 million, which with certainty will all go in the initial few years of the roadmap. It is, of course, open to other Members to increase the availability of that fund through Government Plan amendments this time and indeed it is open for the new States, after the June elections, to be able to shift major money. How much is required? I am not going to be arguing, it is around about £300 million over time. It

depends on the timescale that £300 million has to be spent within. If it is 10 years, for example, then that is £30 million a year, which frankly we should be able to do as a wealthy Island. That is my personal view. Those are the issues for debate on the carbon neutral roadmap.

4.10.6 Deputy S.G. Luce of St. Martin:

The Minister will know, like everybody else does, that historic housing and transport are the greatest emitters of carbon. What we need to do surely is to drive people on to public transport; public transport which is carbon neutral, carbon free, lower carbon. Will the Minister use that emergency fund of £23 million to incentivise LibertyBus to move to a carbon-free transport system, so Islanders can make a contribution to reducing their carbon emissions?

Deputy J.H. Young:

When Members see the roadmap that I have referred to, there will be proposed allocations of incentives; incentives to achieve the switch to carbon-free vehicles. There will also be decisions required in terms of, if you like, the sticks, the cost or charges for those who are unwilling to make those transitions. Yes, as far as I am concerned, having a bus service that meets the communities needs more effectively should be a priority. I am hoping if that debate takes place, and I am still in the Assembly, I shall be pushing for that in that debate.

4.10.7 The Deputy of St. Martin:

Can I ask the Minister why he feels he needs to wait for that debate? Surely it is an absolute given that public transport should be low carbon or carbon neutral and we need to have more people on it. Why do we need to wait for that debate?

Deputy J.H. Young:

In allocating limited funds, there are 2 ways to do it. We can either do it by gut feel or we can effectively make decisions on the basis of analysis, so we can assess, the way that the Senator's original question was, the carbon benefits; what is the saving and what is the cost to make sure we get the best use of that money. I absolutely can confirm that there is no question ... domestic heating is a major area where early gains are possible by providing support payments. Again, I can release the report in confidence to the Deputy if he prefers, because I do accept the point that if the closing date for amendments is 30th November, Members may wish to see that early.

4.10.8 The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Little work seems to have been done with regard to air quality monitoring and evidence therefrom. Would the Minister let Members know how he intends to proceed to rectify that situation?

Deputy J.H. Young:

The Constable will know how disappointed I was that the great idea of doing this sandbox project with Digital Jersey has not succeeded. I have met with Digital Jersey. I have met with others. We have now launched a new project where we are buying some kit. We are doing some immediate improvement in monitoring an alternative plan. However, in order to do the whole job and do it properly, I have asked for a proposal of funding to go through the system. There are 2 routes. It can either be done through amendment to the Government Plan, which I have suggested to the Connétable. I have sent him the papers. I have given him all the information and the business plan for that is available. These tasks do need decent resources. £250,000 is the estimate for that.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I thank the Minister for his answer.

4.10.9 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

What work has the Minister planned to assist people in adapting to a warmer climate?

Deputy J.H. Young:

It becomes about homes. The question of construction and design of people's homes is the most important area for that. That is in progress through the Island Plan work, which has set policies in there for a carbon neutral adaptation. There is also the issue about management of floods and building homes in areas of flood-risk and so on. Those sorts of things are very advanced in the Island Plan. The building regulation side is, of course, under discussion with a review of the building regulations, which will go part and parcel with that. That will help us cool our homes. Those are the adaptation approaches for us. We are fortunate that we do not have the immediate threats of survival of whole populations that large parts of the world face. That is where we are.

[11:30]

4.10.10 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

How will the Minister justify his position when it is proved that there is no emergency and that he has bankrupted low-income families for nothing?

The Bailiff:

That is outside the realm of the original question, which was about steps taken to reduce carbon emissions, Senator. I am afraid I rule that question as out of order.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

In which case, how will the Minister justify his position when the steps that he is recommending to deal with carbon emissions are found to be based on fallacious science?

The Bailiff:

Again, Senator, that is again not in accordance with Standing Orders, because it requires a hypothetical position to be dealt with and it is impossible for the Minister to answer if his evidentially position is different. It is posing an unproven and hypothetical situation, I am afraid.

4.10.11 Senator S.Y. Mézec:

Quite right on your ruling just then, Sir. I have asked the Minister twice if he can attempt to list tangible measures that he has taken since taking office that have had a direct and measurable impact on the production of carbon emissions in Jersey. In response, he has only referred to things like hosting a webinar, going to COP, reviewing this, reviewing that. All of which is the sort of thing that Greta Thunberg would describe as blah, blah, blah. There are only a few months of this term of office left, is the Minister saying to us that the legacy from this term of office will simply be words on a sheet of paper and not to anything that we can point to and say that had an impact in reducing Jersey's carbon emissions? Is that really what the end achievement of this 4 years' term of office is going to be given the existential crisis we are facing?

Deputy J.H. Young:

It is hard to answer that without giving a very rude answer. As far as I am concerned, I have worked my gut off, if I am allowed to use that argument, in order to progress this. As far as I am concerned, we have to make sure we have a framework of long-term decisions, long-term change that sets this

Island on the right path and will put us ahead of other places in the world. That is the task that I have taken on. Reserve judgment, please, Senator, until you see the work that we have in progress in our roadmap. I will give him a list. The list is not blah, blah, blah, because he asked me for that, he asked me the question.