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5.6 Deputy P.D. McLinton of St. Saviour of the Minister for Environment regarding the introduction of a tax on carbon emissions:

Is the Minister prepared to consider introducing a tax on carbon emissions in order to encourage a move towards more environmentally friendly practices from both individuals and businesses in Jersey?

Deputy S.G. Luce of St. Martin (The Minister for Environment):

Pathway 2050: An Energy Plan for Jersey is this Assembly's agreed plan for reducing carbon emissions. It contains a number of actions to reduce energy use and carbon emissions to a level of 80 per cent below 1990 levels by 2050. This is in line with Jersey's international commitments under the Kyoto Protocol. The Energy Plan also has an overall objective of secure, affordable and sustainable energy for Jersey's objectives against which all policies are measured. The Energy Plan does not currently propose the introduction of a new carbon-based tax. Instead a suite of other measures are described within it. So the answer to the Deputy is currently no, but I would consider the introduction of new carbon taxes but only if I was sure that the agreed policy regime to reduce carbon emissions was failing and, in addition, I would need to be convinced that any new tax was fair and proportionate.

5.6.1 Deputy P.D. McLinton:

It is interesting the answer the Minister gave. Following the recent Paris climate summit, which concluded with a commitment by 95 per cent of Governments to reduce their CO₂ emissions, I am very pleased to hear that the Minister for Environment has considered maybe moving this forward, however a price on carbon reinvested in society - a citizens bonus as it were - clawing the money back into society is ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

Deputy, could you come to a question please because you have made several points rather than ask a question?

Deputy P.D. McLinton:

It is a force of habit, I beg your pardon. I will try and move on and be more succinct. Will the Minister commit to sit down and talk with people far more savvy on this subject than I am to look for a way forward so that we can definitely commit to what is proposed?

The Deputy of St. Martin:

I am happy to commit to look at any new initiatives which might reduce carbon. We currently have, as I described in the plan, some policies about bylaws and building houses which demand less energy. We have some advice available within the department to give to those people in the able-to-pay sector and we also work with the Department of Infrastructure to assist and move towards more sustainable transport. But I do say to Members, that is about lowering carbon and one of the issues we do have in Jersey - we are very fortunate - is that we have energy which is not only very lowly priced but it is also low in carbon. What we need to do if we want to reduce our carbon is to look at oils and gases, and that is somewhere we

would have to go if we are going to reduce our carbon further. The V.E.D. (vehicle emissions duty) is the tool that we use currently. It is the only carbon-based tax that we currently have, and Members will remember that I argued as forcibly as I could in the recent Budget debate for that. Interestingly enough, 2 of the amendments, one to do with vintage cars and another to do with farmers, the Deputy and many others felt it was not necessary and I did not manage to get those amendments through. But anyway I do commit to the Deputy to look at it again and will continue to work on the subject.

5.6.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Would the Minister be able to tell us what the biggest factors are, i.e. the biggest contributors to carbon emissions in Jersey are at the moment?

The Deputy of St. Martin:

It is quite clear that there are 2 main issues when it comes to carbon emissions. The first one is the energy used to heat houses and the second one is transport.

5.6.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

In the wider context of reducing carbon emissions and having a policy, could the Minister say whether any consideration has ever been given to the financial services industry, which might provide services for very high carbon emission polluter investors doing business in the Island? Does the Council of Ministers have a policy on this?

The Deputy of St. Martin:

No, the Council of Ministers does not have a policy on that but I can say to the Deputy, as I am sure he knows, that large corporate entities take their environmental responsibilities increasingly seriously and they are always looking at ways that they can improve. Certainly many of them are very keen on any initiatives which can promote CleanTech, as it is known. GreenTech is another one. I know they do take their responsibilities as seriously as we all do.

5.6.4 Deputy A.D. Lewis:

The Minister just alluded to what I was about to ask. However, can he just confirm how much dialogue and what progress has been made in his dialogue between the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the Sustainable Transport Policy, as he has just stated that one of the biggest emissions of course is vehicle emissions with regard to carbon monoxide? So what progress has been made with the Sustainable Transport Policy and its negotiations with the Minister for Infrastructure to get that policy moving forward much quicker?

The Deputy of St. Martin:

The Minister for Infrastructure and myself are constantly in dialogue over all the policies which we have mutual interest in, and certainly this is one. I am critical of him at times for not trying to move on with the Sustainable Transport Policy faster. We know that trying to get people out of cars and on to public transport would be a good way to save carbon because we would have less combustible engines running on the road. But it is difficult and the Minister and I talk regularly. It is a challenge.

[11:30]

We all know that Jersey people love their vehicles and they love driving into town in the morning and driving home at night. I am as guilty as any. But we continue to work at the problem and certainly with the new V.E.D. duties I think that will help and we will continue, as I have said to this Assembly previously, to look hard at where we can make it even more challenging for people to buy high carbon emitting vehicles.

5.6.5 Deputy A.D. Lewis:

The Minister has in the past said one of the ways, of course, of resolving this is to drastically increase parking charges. Is he keen to continue to pursue that as a policy?

The Deputy of St. Martin:

I am not sure if the Deputy means me or the Minister for Infrastructure but I think that both of us would say there must be a direct correlation between the price people pay for their parking and their willingness to use their cars to drive into town. It is one of many on a list of things which is available to us. Some people would say if you want to force or encourage people on to public transport, making it more expensive to park their cars in town, is something that we would need to look at. We will continue to look at it just like we may also continue to look at the provision that private people make for parking their cars on private land in town. There are a number of levers which we can pull and we will continue to look at them.

5.6.6 Deputy P.D. McLinton:

Businesses such as Microsoft, Apple, IKEA have set up their own internal carbon price, paying the money into carbon sequestration projects. Would the Minister consider encouraging big business in Jersey to do much the same?

The Deputy of St. Martin:

I am not fundamentally aware of those issues that the Deputy raises there but I will certainly investigate them. If it is a way of saving carbon I would be very interested to know what they are.