

4.8 Connétable P.J. Rondel of St. John of the Minister for Treasury and Resources regarding electricity power cuts over the last 10 years:

Would the Minister, as the shareholder representative, advise how many power cuts there have been over the last 10 years, what the causes were and what action, if any, the J.E.C. (Jersey Electricity Company) is taking to put in place a reliable, robust, continuous power supply?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf (The Minister for Treasury and Resources):

I have circulated a chart in order to assist Members in answering this oral question and this is a supplement to the written question from the Connétable as well. I am advised that the J.E.C. supply system is a complex one with several voltages being distributed across the Island and including 3 submarine cables and other generation capacity on the Island. The system is installed with, I am advised, the European standards in accordance with those standards to ensure quality and reliability of the power in the Island. The network meets best practice developed over a number of years by the company and ensures safety and reliability. The charts that I have handed out, show the low number of faults, which the system has safely and efficiently dealt with over the past 10 years. The first chart shows the system faults split between low and high voltage. The second chart shows faults from the above figures caused by third parties, i.e. developers cutting through a power line having not properly surveyed a site before building, and other such matters. Finally, also the table of those faults in number 4. The J.E.C. monitors faults and interruptions to supplies and takes action continuously to improve its performance. I am also advised that the J.E.C. is currently looking into the third interconnector to France, which subject to planning permission will be commencing within the next couple of years and also they are investing in the on-Island generation with 2 additional diesel engines that are currently being installed at La Collette.

4.8.1 The Connétable of St. John:

I note in the graph that the Minister gave us the continual downfall in disruption until 2008 but since 2008 onwards, until today, we have had a considerable increase. That being the case, can the Minister explain the reason why we have had this upturn since 2008?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

I am many things but I am not the Managing Director of the J.E.C. and I am not an expert in electricity, although I have been briefed. I think the figures stand for themselves. If I refer the Connétable to the written question where there is a comparison of the faults in Jersey compared to other places and I think the Jersey Electricity Company do a very good job in terms of reliability. There have certainly been a slight increase in the last 3 years but the results for the J.E.C. stand by themselves and are extremely good compared to other Crown Dependencies and other European systems. Indeed, I should take the opportunity of congratulating the J.E.C. on investing in the network to ensure that the reliability is maintained, but always improvements must be made.

4.8.2 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

While I hate to think of the Constable of St. John having to write his questions in the dark, does the Minister for Treasury and Resources agree with me that really this is not a major problem compared with some other jurisdictions?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

I agree with the Deputy but of course any power cut is going to, by a proper evaluation, need to be looked at and certainly I have asked questions about this issue to the J.E.C. I think it is absolutely vital that we have extremely high reliability of electricity in the Island. They have explained to me that there was an unfortunate set of circumstances in relation to this issue where the power supply failed. You do not normally expect 2 undersea cables to fail and have that

happen in a period of time when the diesel generation, which should kick in, was in the process of being reinstalled in the Island. A number of features happened. I am very confident that we have on-Island generation. Importing of electricity is important because it is low carbon and it is low cost, which can be passed on to consumers, so we need both.

4.8.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

Can the Minister give any information about J.E.C.'s plans perhaps to make the Island more self-sufficient when it comes to electricity and what their plan is to do with renewable energy?

The Bailiff:

I think a bit off the subject.

Deputy M. Tadier:

If I can just say, obviously we get power cuts which are not within our control. If there is an issue that happens in France with a cable that will result in a power cut in Jersey and obviously the more control we can have over generating our own energy it would be in our own hands, so to speak, so I think there is at least a tenuous link.

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

I am happy to answer that. The Deputy is right. We need both the benefit of imported power, low carbon, low-cost energy, but also we need the resilience on-Island and that is why we have got gas turbines, the J.E.C.'s got diesel generators, which kick in. I think they are Rolls Royce engines, like a jet aircraft, that kicks in within a number of seconds and the more traditional steam turbines, which takes a number of time to do. Added to that, of course now is the important contribution to the network of the Energy from Waste plant, which I am advised can at its peak production produce 12 megawatts of a total load of 155 winter total load, within the winter. So it is absolutely important that all of this on-Island generation is capable but of course it is going to be at a higher cost than the imported power, we need both. I hope that he takes assurance from that.

4.8.4 Deputy J.A. Hilton of St. Helier:

In the Senator's first part of the question that he answered he explained that there were 3 submarine cables between Jersey and France. Then in a later answer he referred to an unusual set of circumstances whereby 2 undersea cables failed at the same time. Can he clarify that when that happened that all 3 cables were working originally and that we were just left with one cable working or was there complete failure and all 3 cables were not functioning?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

One thing I am going to do is I am going to ask the J.E.C. to provide Members with a briefing on the state of our electricity so that they can understand some of the technicalities. The Assistant Minister and I will organise that in the coming months. There are 2 cables, there is EDF1 and EDF2. EDF1 is the older cable. There was a fault in the second cable, which meant the entire load went to the first cable which then failed. That cable itself is the reason why the company is investing in the new Normandy 3 cable that will be effectively securing our resilience in the longer term, and that has already been in plan for a number of years. That first one is 28 years old. It is envisaged that it was going to be replaced. The replacement is estimated at a cost of £50-60 million and planning permission is currently underway. It is expected to become operational in 2015.

4.8.5 Senator L.J. Farnham:

Very briefly, I wonder if the Minister happens to know that since the recent power cut is the Island still generating its own electricity or are we back on the supply from the cables?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

We are back on the cables, I am advised. That is not the case in Guernsey of course who have got a permanent fault between the Jersey and Guernsey cable, and that is also receiving some attention and hopefully the whole of the Channel Island grid will be up and running. But we do need to make this long term investment to secure a continuation of supply.

4.8.6 The Connétable of St. John:

Having worked on the installation of the original steam turbines that was 40-plus years ago in the middle 1960s, given the major breakdowns we have had in recent times, 2 major ones, and the problems with the submarine cables, I am heartened to hear that another cable is being proposed but is that in conjunction with other companies, i.e. oil and gas lines, so we put the whole thing in at once or are we just going to rely solely on electricity yet again and not try and bring in within the fold the other 2 supplies of energy on the same line?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

No doubt the gas turbines were well installed because they are serving the steam turbines, which the Connétable was installing. He did some good work then perhaps and they continue to work. I cannot really comment on the other energy suppliers but it is important to perhaps reflect that there is a long awaited energy policy that is going to guide the overall energy resilience for the Island and we very much hope that that is going to be done in conjunction with Guernsey. It would be a good idea to have an energy policy for the whole of the Channel Islands, and that would guide our respective resilience plans across the Island. In relation to on-Island generation...

The Bailiff:

I think the question is just about gas and oil and I think you said you do not know about that.

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

The energy policy is going to solve it.

The Connétable of St. John:

It did, in fact, cover gas, oil and electricity as one pipeline straight cable.

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

I am advised that I do not think that that is possible. But again we look forward to the briefing that the J.E.C. will provide on exactly what their resilience is. I take this opportunity of thanking the J.E.C. and all their staff for the hard work that they did in restoring the Island's network so quickly.