

2.6 Connétable D.J. Murphy of Grouville of the Minister for Planning and Environment regarding lifting restrictions on the replacement of windows in older properties:

In the interest of the conservation of energy, will the Minister consider easing the restrictions and strictures on the replacement of windows in older properties?

Senator F.E. Cohen (The Minister for Planning and Environment):

The Connétable of Grouville's question is a timely coincidence as for many months I have been looking at ways of relaxing controls and replacing windows on older non-listed properties constructed before the 1920s, as these required planning consent. Finally, last week I signed off a significant revision to the regulations. This allows the windows on non-listed pre-1920s buildings to be replaced with new timber frame windows without making a planning application. This allows the owners of older properties to fit double-glazed window units and thus improve energy conservation.

2.6.1 The Connétable of Grouville:

I welcome the Minister's initiative here, Sir, but I am talking about basically listed buildings and additions to listed buildings which are not listed, if you follow me there. The listed buildings are, in fact, said to include recent additions which are not new. Now, I would also like him, while he is in the mood for this, to please ask his department if they would have a root and branch clearout of the petty regulations which achieve nothing except to annoy the population?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I have done a great deal to remove petty regulations and, in fact, last week again I signed a new general development order that significantly revises the list of alterations to properties requiring planning consent and removes many areas that would previously have been considered red tape. The issue of listed buildings is a complex matter. You cannot simply allow the alteration of windows and replacement of windows in listed buildings without some control. Indeed, I feel it is appropriate that control of the replacement of windows in listed buildings is retained. However, the view I have taken is that if the control over windows is warranted then the building should be listed and that is why I have removed the previous restriction on controlling windows in pre-1920s buildings.

2.6.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Would the Minister accept that technology with, for example, U.P.V.C. (Unplasticised Poly Vinyl Chloride) windows has now moved so much that in fact the disadvantages they had in regard to wooden windows has now disappeared and therefore he is in a better position to approve them?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

No, Sir, I most certainly would not. The environmental consequences of the production and manufacture and disposal of U.P.V.C. windows puts them at a significant disadvantage from an overall environmental perspective to other solutions. Personally, I also feel that U.P.V.C. windows often do not have an appropriate aesthetic impact on certainly older properties, and I seek to encourage timber framed windows wherever possible.

2.6.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Minister not agree that once again we are presented with a conflict between his role as Minister for Environment and his role as Minister for Planning.

Senator F.E. Cohen:

No, not at all. In this case this is quite the opposite. This is where I have taken on board the obligations with regard to the natural environment and the obligations with regard to the built environment and come out with a clear conclusion that in this case benefits both. So, no, I disagree with Deputy Southern.

2.6.4 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Would the Minister therefore accept given the apparent and possible environmental advantages of wooden over U.P.V.C. would it now be his policy to ensure that in all new building applications wooden windows are installed?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

No, Sir, not in all. There are cases where, for example, steel crittle windows are more appropriate, particularly in the case of a 1930s inspired design and there are cases when dealing with modernist and post-modernist designs that powder coated aluminium frames are more appropriate but I cannot think of any architectural genre that benefits from U.P.V.C. windows.

2.6.5 The Connétable of Grouville:

Firstly, Sir, I would like to thank the Minister for his reply. Would he not agree with me that U.P.V.C. windows are more heat efficient than wooden ones?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

No, Sir, I most certainly would not. In fact well designed timber windows, as many Members will have seen in their travels around Europe, can be exceptionally thermally efficient and combine exceptional thermal efficiency with the highest environmental credentials.

2.6.6 The Deputy of St. Martin:

Yes, Sir, it is very close again to what Deputy Le Hérissier was asking. Does the Minister think it appropriate - indeed fair - to insist on people building new properties to put wooden windows when quite clearly their preference would be plastic?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

Yes, Sir, I most certainly do. It is my job to ensure that we leave a legacy of an improved built environment. That is what I have sought to do over the last 2 and a half years and my view is very firmly that other than in very exceptional cases U.P.V.C. windows are not the best aesthetic solution and in environmental terms they also most certainly are not the best solution. However, that does not mean that we are prescriptive over-requiring solely timber windows. As I said there are cases for steel frame windows and cases for aluminium powder coated windows as well.

2.6.7 Deputy J.J. Huet of St. Helier:

Would the Minister agree, Sir, it is still that U.P.V.C. windows are a lot cheaper than wooden windows so if you happen to be renovating an older property and you are not rich it is going to cost you a lot more money?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

No, Sir, that information is not correct. In fact timber framed windows and aluminium windows can be significantly less expensive than U.P.V.C. windows. It depends where you source them. If the Deputy would like I can give her specific information in relation to that afterwards because I have done some work in that area.

2.6.8 Deputy S.C. Ferguson of St. Brelade:

Has the Minister not noticed that the new U.P.V.C. windows can very often not be distinguished from the wooden windows and is he not aware of the recycling work that is being done with U.P.V.C. windows, particularly in Germany where new windows are in fact made from the old window?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

My eyesight may not be quite what it once was but I can spot a U.P.V.C. window at 50 yards. As far as the environmental credentials of U.P.V.C. windows are concerned, even with recycling - and

I am aware of a number of recycling efforts but they are not available of course in the Channel Islands - that even taking that into account there are other materials that are in the round more environmentally sound. I propose for the moment to continue on my current path.

2.6.9 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will the Minister accept my congratulations on mastering yet another area of expertise under his brief to add to his mastery of door handles?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

As usual the Deputy is flippant and rather rude. I prefer not to answer the question.