

2.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour of the Minister for Planning and the Environment regarding regulations on energy efficiency:

Would the Minister state whether comprehensive regulations embracing energy efficiency in construction will be introduced and if so when?

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

It is recognised that with climate change fears and rising energy costs that my department has an important part to play to ensure that buildings being constructed today are as energy efficient as is reasonably possible, and I am pleased to say the building by-laws which set standards for the construction of buildings already impose a number of requirements to achieve this. Those requirements are indeed comprehensive, and include ensuring a high standard of insulation to the external fabric of buildings which are newly constructed or extended; setting insulation standards for windows which are replaced in existing buildings; setting standards for airtightness to reduce heat loss by air leakage; requirements for commissioning and testing of space heating, and hot water systems, to ensure they operate efficiently; requirements for operating and maintaining manuals to be provided for building owners and occupiers to help them use their services more efficiently; imposing requirements to ensure that energy efficiency lighting is provided in buildings; setting standards to avoid solar overheating, as well as performance standards for air conditioning and mechanical ventilation in non-domestic buildings; setting energy efficiency standards for replacing heating boilers in dwellings. I am already looking at the merits of geo-thermal heating systems. As you are aware I have responsibility for bringing forward an energy policy for Jersey. I anticipate that energy use in buildings will form an important part of that and will make further improvements to by-laws to reflect this. The department will be issuing a consultation paper on proposals to extend the current by-law requirements to further improve energy efficiency in buildings in 2007.

2.3.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Would the Minister identify whether he feels the take-up, for example, of solar panels has been as much as was anticipated?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I am happy to report that, in general, of buildings that are constructed presently are some 18 per cent more energy efficient than those that were constructed 2 years ago. As far as solar panels and more widely other energy efficiency measures are concerned, clearly there needs to be a great deal more done in this area. This will form a main part of a programme that I am proposing to launch later in the year, at the moment entitled The Environmental Citizenship Programme. This will be designed to harness Islanders' undoubted enthusiasm to embrace environmentally beneficial practices, and to put in place measures to encourage them to embrace these technologies, including solar panels. So, I hope for a significant improvement next year.

2.3.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will the package of measures the Minister outlines extend to the provision of grants to render current housing more thermally efficient?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

This is something I am actively looking at. We need most certainly to provide financial inducements to enable people to improve the insulation levels in their homes, and to embrace more energy efficient measures, and I will be looking at it as part of a comprehensive package.

2.3.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Is the Minister suitably assured that all public housing is built to the highest energy standards possible, and thereby minimising the wasteful use of energy?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

No, I am not satisfied that all housing is built to the highest standards possible, but I am satisfied that the standards imposed at the moment represent a reasonable balance. However, there is room for improvement and improvement will be made as a result of the package that I have previously outlined to be brought forward next year.