

2.2 Deputy S. Pitman of St. Helier of the Minister for Planning and Environment regarding the development of a policy to reduce the use of paper and envelopes, to increase recycling and to increase the use of such recycled products:

Following the launch of the Eco-Active Initiative, would the Minister inform Members whether his department will be developing a States policy to reduce the use of paper and envelopes, increase the recycling of such resources, and encourage the use of recycled products?

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

The Eco-Active website is already creating a discussion about how we can behave more environmentally responsibly. I am pleased to report that the website is now being updated constantly and we have a new blogger every week. The practical delivery of environmentally positive actions needs to be led by States' departments, and Eco-Active will provide important information and advice to help at private, corporate and government level. The States Recycling Team within T.T.S. (Transport and Technical Services) already support and encourage initiatives for recycling office commodities like paper and printer cartridges. These opportunities are already in place in most locations, but I would be delighted to see even greater levels of participation. Already there has been positive take-up with recent schemes, including recycling paper, cans, and spent toner cartridges. There has also been a switch to a recycled brand of headed paper. Importantly, we must recognise that we can only achieve enhanced recycling within the States and across the Island if we have the funds to process the materials that we collect. That is the purpose of the current Environmental Taxes Consultation Paper. This proposes spending an additional £1 million annually on enhanced recycling out of the proposed ring-fenced fund. There are many examples of how we can do better and at the same time save money. The States I.T. Department is asking all employees to turn off their computers overnight and at weekends. This could be a key part of a scheme to save up to £40,000 annually on the States' electricity bill. Thank you.

2.2.1 Deputy D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence:

In his response the Minister, I feel, did not accurately answer the question, which I believe was asking whether a policy would be introduced on the matter of recycling. The Minister advised us that his department is giving advice to other States departments, and I believe advice in this case is not enough. I believe that we should be working to a prescribed policy, and I would like the Minister to comment upon that, please?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

As I explained in some detail in my response, the T.T.S. Department - under whom recycling mainly comes - are already involved in a number of schemes to promote recycling. Within my department we are doing everything we possibly can, but the Eco-Active Initiative is at early stages and I can assure the House that in a relatively short time we will have a policy in place within my department to promote recycling and other environmentally positive initiatives throughout the department.

2.2.2 Deputy S. Pitman:

Yes, Sir. Could the Minister inform Members how his department will work with T.T.S. in developing such a policy?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

My department will proactively engage with T.T.S. - and is already proactively engaging with T.T.S. - to ensure that a policy is implemented. But as I stressed earlier, in terms of having real impact throughout the Island the only way we are going to be able to have real impact in relation to many of these environmentally positive measures is if we are able to engender support among the community for a ring-fenced Environmental Fund paid for out of environmental taxes, and that is precisely what the Environmental Taxes Consultation Paper is all about.

2.2.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will the Minister not agree that the only thing we are recycling here is hot air, words, and waffle? When is he going to come to the House with some concrete proposals to reduce energy consumption for example?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I do not think it would be correct to accuse me as the one who is waffling. **[Laughter]** We are within the department in the very final stages of preparing an energy policy. We are doing everything we possibly can to move forward on Eco-Active as a central part of creating an environment within which people are empowered to make environmentally positive decisions. I do not see that we can do much more.

2.2.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will his initiative contain realistic and achievable targets for this Island to achieve in terms of energy consumption?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

Yes, Sir, that is the precise objective of the energy policy. But remember the energy policy at some point will be subject to a States debate and it will be States Members who determine what part is implemented and what part is not.

2.2.5 Deputy S. Pitman:

Does the Minister have any figures on how much the States currently recycle, and if not could he supply them?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I do not have any precise figures, but I had predicted that question and have already asked for an answer. As soon as I have the answer it will be circulated to all Members.

2.2.6 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains of St. Clement:

I wonder if the Minister could advise us when the energy policy might be coming to Members for consultation, because it does...

The Greffier of the States (in the Chair):

I think you are pre-empting a later question, Deputy, are you not? I think the Constable of Grouville is asking that very thing.

Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

In that case I shall leave it to somebody else to ask the question, Sir.

2.3.7 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour:

Could the Minister inform us how closely and on what projects he is working with the Minister for Transport and Technical Services?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

The departments, Sir, are jointly working on a range of initiatives but, as I have repeatedly said, the implementation of these initiatives largely depends on the public's acceptance of the concept of paying environmental taxes. We really are not going to achieve very much at all in our endeavours to promote more environmentally positive thinking and to provide the facilities that Islanders want, including better recycling, better bus services, et cetera, without having some funds to use. That is the purpose of a ring-fenced or hypothecated environmental tax. But, as I have said, we are in the early stage, or mid-stages, of the consultation process, and it very much depends on Islanders' response.

