

4.2 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains of St. Clement of the Minister for Planning and Environment regarding the emissions from compressed air vehicles:

With regard to the Air Quality Strategy, would the Minister concede that the alternative vehicle propulsion methods he proposes are inefficient when compared with vehicles having their own engine and that the end result merely swaps one environmental problem for another?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel (The Minister for Planning and Environment):

First of all, with regard to the question, I am not proposing any particular alternative vehicles. I am proposing general principles of the States or any other bodies who are interested in looking at different vehicles that are in a position to reduce the pollutants that are omitted. Likewise, I am not suggesting that vehicles should be adopted that do not have their own engine. Pedal power, for example. While accepting that low emission environmentally friendly powered vehicles such as electric vehicles, hydrogen powered vehicles or compressed air vehicles might not be suitable for all domestic and commercial use, I strongly believe that they can nonetheless contribute towards reducing our carbon emissions and improving our air quality within the built-up area and beyond.

[09:45]

Emissions produced from energy used to fuel cars are the main contributor to air pollution on the Island and we must encourage people to use lower emission, more environmentally friendly powered cars to protect our environment for future generations.

4.2.1 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

The Minister appears to be saying he is not promoting these. In which case, I wonder why he is going to the lengths that he is in saying that he prefers this. Does the Minister appreciate that, for example, electric vehicles are less efficient - because of all the transmission losses - than a diesel powered vehicle? A compressed air vehicle is even worse. So is it not the case that each of those alternatives would use more fuel per mile driven than a diesel powered car and how can there be an environmental benefit then?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

This is a technical issue and while not wishing to bore Members, I am quite happy to take Deputy Baudains to one side **[Laughter]** and to have a technical discussion with an engineer and a mathematician who do not always get on but, that said, the Deputy makes half a point. The omissions that are to be noted are highly dependent on what the primary fuel to power these vehicles is. So if we take, for example, tidal power or indeed wind power being used with gas compression techniques to drive motor vehicles, then obviously the overall emissions are going to be lower. If, on the other hand, one is suggesting that one has a gasoline station in the middle of the sea or somewhere else where we are burning hydrocarbons in order to compress the gases, then obviously those gas emissions would still be being made in a different place. I take that point entirely and it is all about lifecycle costing both in financial terms and in environmental and emission terms. So I think, in this particular case, I take the Deputy's point on board but we are both right.

4.2.2 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Which particular emissions does the Minister want to stop?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

The Minister wants to reduce overall the carbon dioxide emissions and, more notably, the nitrogen emissions and indeed all of the other hydrocarbon pollutants that we breathe from unburned fuels that are driving through our urban canyons.

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

Given the Minister's very ambitious targets, does he not believe that simply substituting one kind of car for another is not really the solution?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

I think there is perhaps a tendency or an impression that when the Minister for Planning and Environment Minister goes off on one, he is way out there on his own but Members have to realise that I am merely indicating - perhaps ahead of the game - those changes that are being made with important car manufacturing companies. If people do a little bit of background research, one will notice that, for example, on 25th January this year, the car company Peugeot suggested that they were going to be bringing out a hybrid air compressed car, albeit by 2016, so it is a little bit ahead of time. But if large manufacturing companies are looking at these things, I am merely the messenger here suggesting that things are on the horizon which can deliver more important and better environmental benefits to the whole of the population, either born or not born, and this is part of the remit of the Minister's job.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Sir, I do not need to ask my question now.

4.2.4 Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier:

Is the Minister aware that a pair of electric motorcycles took a star turn in the recent Jersey International Motoring Festival and that they were among the fastest recorded speeds in the speed trials on Victoria Avenue? Would he agree further with me that the number of Jersey residents who live on heavily congested roads in and out of the urban areas deserve an enthusiastic and wholehearted pursuit of lower emissions in our vehicles on Island roads?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

I agree wholeheartedly with the Constable of St. Helier on this point but will go further to suggest that not everybody would be safe on a fast motorbike and perhaps if those motorbikes had 3 wheels or indeed 4 wheels, it is perhaps the better option.

4.2.5 Deputy S.G. Luce of St. Martin:

The Minister's Air Quality Strategy is informed by data from 2 monitors located within St. Helier. Would the Minister confirm that these monitors do not conform to recognised standards as set out in E.U. (European Union) testing equipment?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

I was under the impression that they did and perhaps the sole argument that was being put forward by the Environment Scrutiny Panel was that perhaps further requests should be made to the Treasury in order to pay for further monitoring. If indeed it can be shown that the monitors that we do have are insufficient to assess the state of affairs according to international standards, then I would be seriously concerned.

4.2.6 Deputy J.H. Young:

Would the Minister confirm that at the recent Environment Scrutiny Panel hearing, it was said by the Director of Public Health that emissions from vehicles was responsible for a substantial amount of lung disease in the Island, particularly in locations close to the road. Would he confirm that?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

Absolutely, and that is why we have these questions presumably because if the Island can do anything or something more to reduce the amount of emissions that can be attributable to poor health conditions or poor living conditions for those living in town, then so much the better.

4.2.7 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

I am not going to get, obviously, into the wider debate of unleaded petrol versus leaded and electric vehicles and battery problems and all that but I have to say that I think everybody realises that compressing air warms it up, so I look forward to the invitation from the Minister to discuss the issue of vehicles powered by hot air. In the interim, I would ask the Minister would he prepare a table showing the total carbon footprint of these alternative vehicles compared with conventional ones?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

I will do but people have to realise that, even with nuclear power, there are carbon emissions and if our accounting systems are to truly paint the correct picture, then perhaps the level playing field of lifecycle costing should be how we present our information. If I can do that - and that is obviously a bigger job - then I will do so.