

2018.11.06

4 Connétable K. Shenton-Stone of St. Martin of the Minister for the Environment regarding discussions with Jersey Electricity in respect of emission limits for its plant: [oq.167/2018]

Given that Jersey Electricity's website states that it is currently in discussion with the Environment Protection Department and Environmental Health over suitable emission limits for its plant, will the Minister detail what discussions have either taken place with Jersey Electricity or are planned; and will he state whether any exemptions for Jersey Electricity in respect of their emission levels are being considered?

Deputy J.H. Young of St. Brelade (The Minister for the Environment)

The emissions from the Jersey Electricity's Power Station at La Collette are not regulated by legislation. There have been only limited discussions between the J.E.C. (Jersey Electricity Company) and departmental officers regarding this matter in recent years, the last discussion being in 2016. However, by agreement made with the Health Officers in 2013, the J.E.C. operates a self-regulation programme and the company's stated intention is that their power station will comply with the E.U. Industrial Emissions Directive 2010/75EU. This deals with polluting emissions from industrial installations of which there are very few in Jersey. The power plant would in fact though be exempted under the E.U. Directive because it is run for less than 500 hours per annum. The E.U. is doing a review of best techniques and the findings on that review are awaited. I am sorry to say we do not have any information from the J.E.C. of the results of their spot tests, which they carried out after 2000 when they replaced earlier monitoring equipment and removed it.

4.4.1 The Connétable of St. Martin:

Would it be possible to obtain the information from the J.E.C. because, if you try to look into them, they are not a very transparent company, it is very difficult to get any information about them or their emission levels? But when they say they are monitoring their own levels, what do they deem as suitable levels and are they based on environmental data or financial considerations?

The Bailiff:

Is the Minister prepared to ask the J.E.C. to answer those questions?

Deputy J.H. Young:

I think I would like to say something, if I may, I apologise for not being able to answer that question properly, being out of the Island and only getting back yesterday. I asked for this information myself. I have asked for the information on the emission levels and I have not received that information. I will follow up and make sure we get it. The only thing I would say is I do have information in detail on the number of hours run by the 4 diesel plants and the 3 gas plants, but of course, as the Constable knows, these are effectively backup plants, which are run occasionally and for maintenance to ensure the Island has that essential. But I will persist in getting that information. But one last comment, the majority of emissions in Jersey do in fact come from vehicle transport, not from industrial emissions.

4.4.2 Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade:

Would the Minister confirm that, given that the emissions from the flues of the E.f.W. (Energy from Waste) plant are rigorously monitored, would it be appropriate that the flues coming from the J.E.C. installation going out through the same chimney should be equally monitored?

Deputy J.H. Young:

In principle, I agree with the Constable. The Constable, I am sure, will be aware when I was told there were about 8 flues in that chimney and only 2 of them are regulated, which are the ones that the Minister for Infrastructure looks after, so that is good news. I think the problem we have is obviously that the level of emissions, the throughput through the E.f.W. plant is continual, and so this is something that regular monitoring works. Where, when you have diesel plant that starts up periodically, irregularly, there is kind of a different need. What the J.E.C. say is that there is no variation in the levels. I am afraid the reality is diesel pollutes.

4.4.3 Deputy K.F. Morel:

I believe the Minister said La Collette plant will comply with the E.U. Regulation 2010. Can we take it as read then that currently it does not comply with this regulation?

Deputy J.H. Young:

I am sorry to say, again I sought that clarification. The information I was given yesterday was given to us through the Jersey Electricity Company was ambiguous and I put it no higher than that on whether the emission levels, the compliance relied upon the derogation, which exists in the E.U. standard, for if plants are operated less than 500 hours per year. I also do not have the information about whether all diesel plants are run at the same time. If they are, obviously if they run separately, different rules apply. I am sorry to say I am waiting for that and I will come back with that information perhaps in a written answer or circulate it to Members, if Members would like.

4.4.4 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

When the Minister follows up with the J.E.C. for information on the emissions, will he make sure they give him the answers about the particulates that come with the emissions because it is the less than 2½ millimetres, I think, is it, particulates are probably the part that do most damage. So will he include that in his request?

Deputy J.H. Young:

Yes, I will, but to be fair to the J.E.C., I could read a long answer here that says that the J.E.C. use what is called primary abatement techniques where they seek to modify the generation units or the fuel to reduce emissions. So, for example, J.E.C. uses low sulphur fuel to avoid excess sulphur in there and also they use water fuel and multiplication units in diesel engines, which reduce nitrogen dioxide emission levels by 10 to 15 per cent. I do not know how that applies to particulates but, again, I will seek that information. I am sorry to be in this position but there is no formal legislation, at the moment we have to rely on the Nuisance Law.

4.4.5 Deputy R.J. Ward:

May I ask the Minister, when you look at the emissions, can you look particularly at the emissions around the Jersey Field Squadron area where we know that their roof has been eroded over the years and it is likely that it is from the emissions of sulphur? Even low sulphur fuel can produce sulphur dioxide, produce acid rain, and can produce localised erosion. I know that has been happening, so can I please urge you to do perhaps checks to the areas very close to where sporadic emissions happen?

Deputy J.H. Young:

I think to answer that I would have to be in the realms of speculation. Obviously, the history of that chimney, it has been there since the early days of the power plant, and all sorts of different equipment has been on the end of it pumping out emissions. Obviously the T.A. (Territorial Army) unit next door has also been there at the same time, will have experienced the outfall from those

chimneys. The J.E.C. have told me pre-2000 there was limited dust and gas monitoring for the flue but a decision was taken at that time in the 2000s not to replace that system because of the costs. That is why the agreement was made to move to spot testing and self-regulation. At the moment I am not able to present the results about how effective that is.

4.4.6 Deputy R. Labey:

Is the Minister aware that residents of Havre des Pas find, if they leave their windows open, an unnaturally large amount of dust and sooty deposits appear very soon on their window sills and is that not something that the Environment Department should be taking a look at?

Deputy J.H. Young:

Yes, I think there is no question about it that this is clearly a gap in our legislative framework. To whether or not the regulatory system would work when we have plants used on a very small number of hours I do not know, I would have to take advice, but historically I do remember when the plant was used on a more ongoing basis - before we had the cable links - I do remember a history of boats being covered in smut and filth and they had to be cleaned. So I am absolutely sure that those flues have a chequered history, but there is no question, to be fair to the J.E.C., they have attempted to improve things. I think maybe the best way for Members is for me to release the answer, the details that I have been given by the J.E.C. to present their side of the situation.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

I thank the Minister and look forward to receiving further information because I think it is in the public interest to know how the emissions are monitored and just what they are. Thank you.