

2018.12.03

19 Deputy R.J. Ward of the Minister for the Environment regarding the introduction of climate change and the reduction of carbon emissions as regular items on the agenda of the Council of Ministers: [OQ.233]

May I ask the Minister, in the light of the recent U.K. climate projection study by the Met Office, which has anticipated significant changes in temperature, rainfall and sea levels by 2070, will the Minister request that climate change and the reduction of carbon emissions become regular items on the agenda of the Council of Ministers?

Deputy J.H. Young (The Minister for the Environment):

The Deputy is absolutely right to highlight the importance of climate change and the need for Jersey to play its part in global emissions. This very report that he mentioned is a very significant one. It was published last week and it is by the Met Office, D.E.F.R.A. (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) and the Environment Agency. For the first time in 10 years it gives us some very clear information about what is ahead: increasing summer temperatures, extreme weather and rising sea levels. So all of that climate change is already on the agenda in the draft common strategic priorities. I see Members shaking their heads. I think there is no room for climate change denial in this report anymore. There are a lot of specifics. Anyway, climate change reliance is in the common strategic policies of the Council of Ministers, and also the work on the energy plan pathway 2050 to reduce our emissions. An energy partnership will oversee that and there will be regular reporting. But having that, I do not think at the moment that it would be beneficial to put it as regular item on the Council of Ministers agenda. It is not a criticism but I do not think it will necessarily get the attention at the moment but, nonetheless, as Minister I will make absolutely sure that work is monitored and brought back and notified to the public and everybody concerned as we proceed with it. But it is a top priority.

3.19.1 Deputy R.J. Ward:

I think you have just hit the nail on the head, so to speak, of my question. The impact of climate change is wide ranging and we need to change our cultural approach of government and understanding the economic, social and health implications. Therefore, it is essential that it must be considered as a central tenet of all the discussions that we have about policymaking on the Island. I would urge the Minister again to reconsider the cultural approach to where climate change fits in across all policy. If it is discussed at the Council of Ministers as such we will get a greater opportunity to make policy that impacts upon lowering our effect on climate change.

Deputy J.H. Young:

I share the Deputy's passion but I fear that achieving a cultural change is a pretty long-term task. We can do that in steps, and the message here is about mitigating the effect of climate change and what we as a community do to do it. Specifics: we are going to be looking at the Island Plan, coastal defences strategy, flood management and what we do about flood waters and so on. There will need to be responses to that in the plans and communities. But cultural change with the key big issues of vehicle emissions and space heating, both of those are areas we are seriously short of and those priorities are in the energy plan and we have to meet them.

3.19.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Something which is directly within the Council of Ministers' gift is whether or not they choose to invest in companies that make money out of fossil fuels. The Minister may well be aware that there is currently a petition on the States of Jersey website which asks for the States to

cease investing or to divest from companies that invest directly in fossil fuels. Is this something the Minister is aware of and is this something that has been raised already or that the Council or indeed the Minister is willing to support?

Deputy J.H. Young:

I am aware of the question. I cannot recall whether I have given an answer in the States or maybe in a letter that I have issued, that I have committed to meeting with the Minister for Treasury to discuss that question of investment policy. The Minister for Treasury has very, very sophisticated and quality arrangements about investment management and of course it is not my responsibility, but I intend to discuss that with the Minister for Treasury because I think that is an important issue of our investment strategies and, if you like, ethical investments generally.

3.19.3 The Deputy of St. Martin:

Climate change is the greatest threat to this globe at the moment, and irrespective of regular items on C.O.M. (Council of Ministers) agendas and discussions between Ministers, I would like to ask the Minister what proposals he will specifically bring to reduce emissions here in Jersey?

Deputy J.H. Young:

Well if I had my way I would do something about transport and that has got me into trouble, as Members know, because this is a shared responsibility across the Council of Ministers. I certainly would want to do something about that. Of course without funding to back up the previous commitment to energy reduction, which was done by the previous Minister and others, it is hard to find ... at the moment it is persuasion, it is by soft measures, and in fact in the budget the Deputy will know I have lodged an amendment, which I am pleased to say I have agreed to withdraw because the Minister for Treasury has given me commitments that the issue of environmental policy and taxes is an issue that will be looked at in 2019. I want to see specific measures, fiscal measures, to encourage those good environmental behaviours. That is an agenda to come and I do not want to be more specific today because I know there will be big debates about some of them, like there was when I happened to mention congestion charges. I will say no more.

3.19.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will the Minister revisit and review the targets set out for energy saving and insulation in homes set out in Energy 2050?

Deputy J.H. Young:

I think we have got some excellent targets; the challenge is to achieve them. In my briefing notes that I have been given I have been told we have done very well, we have reduced our emissions. But of course that was a result of the policy of our energy provider as a result of changed practices by the Jersey Electricity Company. What I am looking for is how we can achieve that, but what I will undertake to the Assembly is that this is a top priority. I will make sure there is a flow of information on progress and when we eventually get to deal with budgets to back up some of these policy changes I will be here bringing those issues to you to make sure, if you like, the rhetoric can be matched with "do". But please, Members, I commend, read this report, *U.K.C.P. (United Kingdom Climate Projection) 2018*. It is a vital report.

3.19.5 Deputy R.J. Ward:

I would just like to point out that I really do believe that the nagging question of climate change on the Council of Ministers agenda is essential if we are genuinely going to drive our influence

over making changes that are so desperately needed for not just this Island but the planet we live on. Simple solutions such as more help with insulation of homes, a move away from fossil fuels, more use of public transport, and putting our children first, because in 2072, 52 years from now, it will be our children who will suffer the social, economic and health consequences through the lack of consideration of this as an agenda item.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Deputy, it really does have to be a question, not a speech.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Therefore, would you agree?

Deputy J.H. Young:

I think the Deputy is asking will I agree to discuss it with the Council of Ministers; yes, I can, but I think I made my point. All those issues, transport, energy, all those things he listed, they require resources and that will be an issue I will be discussing with the Council of Ministers.