

2019.04.30

15 The Deputy of St. John of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the steps taken to remove polluting traffic from the Island's roads: (OQ.100/2019)

Further to his response to Oral Question 79/2019 and given the link between traffic emissions and respiratory illness, will the Minister advise what steps, if any, are being taken to remove polluting traffic from the Island's roads and to reduce emissions? Will he confirm whether any such steps include investigating the creation of an Island-wide park-and-ride bus service?

Deputy K.C. Lewis (The Minister for Infrastructure):

We currently have 3 steps for removing polluting vehicles from Jersey roads. We disincentivise them from coming to Jersey in the first place, by levying higher rates of vehicle emission duty. Secondly, we encourage Islanders to purchase low-emission vehicles, through the eco-permit system. Thirdly, commercial vehicle operator licensing is designed to ensure any non-road-worthy vehicles are removed from circulation. The Island Plan has policies for approving park and ride sites within the built-up area; however, there are currently no new sites large enough, or close enough to the primary route network, which are available.

4.15.1 The Deputy of St. John:

The Minister, I am sure, is aware that most cities in the United Kingdom have introduced park and ride bus services. Will the Minister undertake research, to establish how successful these projects are and how such a project in Jersey will affect congestion, reduce pollution and improve the respiratory health of the population?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Work is ongoing in that respect, as I say, but no new sites have been identified. There are several informal sites that have been used; there is one in St. John, Long Beach in Grouville, where people park and get the bus into town. But, to facilitate such a parking area, one would need to buy a greenfield somewhere and asphalt it over, which will be politically unacceptable. But, we are improving the bus system wherever we can and, indeed, we are electrifying the States' fleets in the not too distant future. With the information I have just given regarding heavy goods vehicles, we hopefully keep pollution down as far as possible.

4.15.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

I can testify to the great success of park and ride. This morning I parked my car - it was not a car, it was a moped - which had run out of petrol and I did park it and I parked it in my drive and then I got the bus in and that is a good example of park and ride. I am quite lucky that I have got a bus just outside my house. But, does the Minister agree that one of the options in a very small island is to have more bus stops, a more accessible bus service, but also to look at parking options in Town, which might encourage people to park on the outskirts and then walk in and to do that via a dynamic pay-card system, where parking charges are different, depending on where you park, relative to the Town centre?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes, I would agree with the Deputy and congratulate him for catching the bus today. We are trying to expand the bus fleets, wherever possible. We have regular talks with LibertyBus; they are a very proactive organisation. Many systems have been tried, we have tried the Parish relay system, where a minibus comes out from the Parish Hall, which is normally run by volunteers, picks people up,

brings them back to the regular bus stop, because a lot of people live in some very rural areas. Sadly, there was not a huge take-up on that and that had to be abandoned. But, we are trying various things with our colleagues at LibertyBus to improve the system. On the southern routes it is not even necessary now to have a bus timetable; there is a bus every 10 minutes, or so, or at least 15 minutes. Also, we have the bus-tracker apps on smartphones, which people are using every day. We are trying to improve the system wherever possible.

4.15.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Will the Minister initiate the measurement and continued monitoring of atmospheric pollution levels in the vicinity of the Island's schools at specific high-density traffic times?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes, indeed, I am well aware of pollution and, as I mentioned briefly, part of the States' fleet will be electrified in the not too distant future. We have 604 vehicles in the States' fleet, so by progressing all of those vehicles to electric will make a huge saving. I have outlined what we are doing with the heavy goods vehicles; they are all tested to a very good standard now ...

Deputy R.J. Ward:

With respect, I am sorry, the question was about monitoring pollution levels around schools.

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I am just getting around to that. The actual pollution monitoring, most of that is done by our colleagues at Environment, but we are well aware of atmospheric pollution and the more electrification we can get, the more the pollution will come down.

4.15.4 Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier:

In a recent press interview, the Minister dismissed an idea of congestion charge, or similar, for St. Helier, but instead said he favoured electric buses. Could the Minister indicate if there are any plans for this change in transport infrastructure and, if yes, where the investment will come from?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes, we have had talks with our colleague at LibertyBus, with regard to electrifying the fleet and the replies we have are very encouraging. We are talking to several manufacturers around the world; we have a problem inasmuch as we use smaller buses than the rest of the world, but that is not insurmountable. It is my desire that, within my tenure at Infrastructure, the bus fleets will be electrified; that is a tough call, but that is my wish. The buses that we have at the moment are enviro 6 standard, euro standard 6, which is very good, very low polluting, but zero pollution is even better. As I say, LibertyBus are on board with us in this and as soon as we can we will electrify the fleet. We are also spending more and more money on building bus shelters, as many bus shelters as we can. Nobody wants to wait in the rain, to make the whole bus ridership more pleasurable for the people of Jersey.

4.15.5 The Deputy of St. John:

If we are serious about taking traffic off the roads, especially during high-density periods, should we be creating disincentives to employers who provide private parking and, potentially, increase the use of public transport and possibly increase the need for a park and ride service?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I am all for getting more cars off the roads. Disincentivising people from providing free parking is one thing; I would rather employers, as part of a possible pay rise, would give their employees bus passes to use the bus fleets on the AvanchiCards and similar. I think that would be a great incentive to get people on the buses.