

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT
BY DEPUTY K.G. PAMPLIN OF ST. SAVIOUR
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 16th JULY 2019**

Question

What steps, if any, are the Minister and his Department taking to reduce the use of single-use plastic in packaging, including any work with major retailers and supermarkets, and what new policies or legislation in relation to this subject does he plan to introduce?

Answer

I acknowledge the urgency to develop new policies, legislation and solutions to reduce the use of single-use plastics and there are a number of activities and workstreams under way to achieve this important objective.

The Council of Minister's Common Strategic Policy includes a number of commitments under the *Protect and Value our Environment* strategic priority. This will be progressed and will include developing a new Island Waste Strategy, achieving plastic free Jersey status and investigating options for a levy on single use plastics and plastic bags. A package of policies and levers to change behaviour to minimise waste generation and the use of single use plastics will be investigated.

The issue of single use plastics is also being addressed by the British-Irish Council (BIC). I attended a BIC symposium in February 2019 on the issue of reducing single use plastics that end up in the marine environment. Jersey will host the next BIC environment Ministerial work stream in May 2020, and discussions will progress those from the last Scottish symposium. These meetings include looking at the reduction of single use plastics at source and involve the retail and supermarket sectors. The European Union is also developing and adopting rules on single-use plastics and we will work towards complying with these.

Government of Jersey (GoJ) eco active officers already work with the eco active business network and other businesses to provide bespoke support and guidance on matters relating to the use of plastics. Officers have had 1-2-1 meetings with some of the larger retailers, including supermarkets, to consider the use of plastic packaging. This GoJ and industry relationship has resulted in one supermarket chain organising a staff awareness session and tour of the GoJ Energy Recovery Facility, to help the understanding of what happens to waste in Jersey that cannot currently be recycled.

Supermarkets and other major retailers have set their own reduction targets to effectively tackle this challenging issue, in alignment with national policies where applicable. These are bringing about packaging reductions rather than always replacing one type of single-use packaging with another. Retailers will continue to reduce their use of plastics, but it takes time for these changes to come into effect, especially where there are large supply chains. It is worth noting that Jersey supermarkets introduced a charge for single use carrier bags in supermarkets a number of years ago and this has had a positive impact on reducing the use of plastic bags.

GoJ are a key partner in the Plastic Free Jersey campaign and large supermarkets have been invited to sit on the steering group. The Plastic Free Jersey campaign has been heavily supported by my department and has had considerable success. We are presently in 'Plastic Free July'. In Jersey we are focusing this month on the business community, especially the hospitality sector and are encouraging businesses who are reducing packaging and encouraging reusable options to display a poster in their establishment to encourage reuse. Removing single use plastics is the best option so campaigns like this compliment the waste hierarchy.

Food waste is a major environmental issue with significant environmental impacts. In some circumstances plastic packaging extends the shelf life of food or food products thereby reducing the amount of wasted food. Supermarkets are considering the removal of packaging alongside the issue of wasted food so that they are not replacing one environmental problem with another. Packaging is vital to avoid contamination of certain food types and the major supermarkets are working to replace single use plastics with alternative packaging such as vegetable starch. However, as we do not have landfill or industrial composting in Jersey the benefits of this switch would be minimal. The new Food Safety Law will soon be published for public consultation, and this new legislation will address the issue of wasted food generated by retail. A ban of single use plastic packaging could result in an increased quantity of wasted food which would be counter-productive.