

2020.03.09

12 Deputy K.F. Morel of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the rate of recycling in Jersey: (OQ.66/2020)

Does the Minister assess the current rate of recycling of waste material in Jersey as satisfactory; and what policies is he championing to encourage more recycling?

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

This is an interesting question; it depends how you assess the current situation. Jersey currently separates approximately a third of its waste for recycling. This is achieved with generally no financial incentives attached to recycling and without every home receiving a recycling collection. When you consider these points, the recycling rate of a third does not seem as low as it might at first glance, but Jersey's recycling rate does not compare well with other jurisdictions that have charges in place for general waste. Mature recycling collections are more advanced tools to calculate their recycling rates. In the absence of various measures, that have a direct influence on the recycling rate, Jersey's recycling rate is fair, but I cannot say it is satisfactory as we are always working towards recycling more. In regard to policies to encourage more recycling - we have mentioned the Parishes previously - working with the remaining 4 Parishes to bring recycling collections to the doorstep of every home continues to be a priority, and I am pleased that my officers are in discussions with 2 Parishes on this very matter. I also champion the ongoing community engagement that my Department delivers changing everyday behaviours to more sustainable practices. It takes time and I believe we are making positive progress in the long term.

3.12.1 Deputy K.F. Morel:

Earlier, we had questions about milk carton recycling and I am intrigued by the Minister's reference to the Parishes because, while that is out of his control, it would be interesting to know what the Minister is doing about matters, which are under his control and how to improve recycling. This is with particular regard to plastic bottle recycling, which has barely moved in years in terms of the amount of plastic bottles being recycled and other areas. We still see no mixed-waste sorting bins in public areas and things like this, so I would be very intrigued for the Minister to enlighten the Department on matters under his control that he is seeking to improve.

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes, the plastics' recycling is going well. I am always keen to improve that. Jersey's recycling rate is quite good. Behind the headline lie many successes, such as the recycling of batteries with over 25 tonnes of batteries being received in 2019. That is a lot of AA batteries. This ongoing success does not impact on the overall recycling rate, as the tonnage was too small. I am very keen to expand recycling into all 12 Parishes as much as possible, so we can ship it away for recycling. I have mentioned previously more than happy to get my officers to look again at milk cartons.

3.12.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

The Minister knows that while we all try to aspire to be good citizens, that often life gets the better of us and some people think that if it burns, just stick it in the bin, might as well, we have a big Energy from Waste plant to feed and that gets converted into free electricity. Of course, it is not quite that rosy. Does the Minister agree that until we start charging by weight for conventional refuse and it is weighed, there is going to be no disincentive for people to not put recyclables in the ordinary bin, especially if they do not have kerbside recycling in their Parish?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I would agree that there are some difficulties with kerbside recycling, especially if one lives in possibly a block of apartments and to get all of the separation sorted, but it is possible. I am not in favour of charging for domestic waste and I believe the Chief Minister is of the same opinion. It is more of an education than anything else. We do not want undesirable objects going into the Energy from Waste plant, we are trying to keep as much glass out as we can, we are trying to keep as much metals as we can out of the Energy from Waste plant, as it does cause a lot of damage. We want to recycle as much plastics as possible.

3.12.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

Again, the Minister starts his answer by saying he would agree that kerbside recycling has its problems, when that was not the question that I asked. I asked what we can do to get numbers of people recycling up and getting less recyclables in the main waste stream. One example, what do you do if you have an old jam jar full of jam, like I had and you cannot get the lid off it because it is rusted onto it, do you put that in the glass bin? What does one do with that and what does one do with a glass bottle that one finds in Town on the street when there is no glass recycling bins? Is it responsible for somebody to leave it on the street potentially for that to get run over by a car with shards and children getting hurt by it, or do you put it in the ordinary bin, or do you just leave it? What does a responsible citizen do in the face of all of these challenges?

The Deputy Bailiff:

Minister, you have a glass jar question to resolve.

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

What should Deputy Tadier do with his glass jar?

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Do not go there. [Laughter]

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I will take Deputy Southern's advice on that one. But there is always a way around it. We do not want it going into the waste as normal, of course it will go into the ground, or there are always ways of getting the top off. If he has a problem, I will come around and help him with it, because I have a senior citizen's top remover, which I will more than likely let him have to get the top off his jars for his jam. I know it is a hypothetical question; there will always be items that must not go into the waste stream and we will deal with those on an *ad hoc* basis.

3.12.4 Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Can the Minister assure the Assembly that all of the cardboard is being recycled and it is not being burned in the incinerator?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Interesting question; there was a time when cardboard was recycled, it was being exported at about £75 a tonne at one point, but then there was the slump and it went down to £15 a tonne and at one point, if it was marked in any way, it was put into the incinerator. But prices have come up again, they have remained stable and, as far as I know, cardboard is exported to be recycled.

3.12.5 Deputy R.J. Ward:

If we are successful at recycling and it really does increase and renders our incinerator redundant, is he happy to scrap it because of its environmental impact, or would he just seek rubbish from elsewhere to keep it running?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

There is always enough rubbish that cannot be recycled. We are more than happy for the Deputy to come down and have a guided tour of the Energy Recovery Unit, it is such a high grade now that it is not called Energy from Waste plant; it is officially a European standard Energy Recovery Unit. There are egg shells, there are teabags, there are all sorts of domestic waste that go into the incinerator that cannot be recycled. We try to minimise that, which is good, because it prolongs the life of the Energy Recovery Unit and, as I say, it does generate electricity, which goes into the grid, and I believe we generate up to 7 per cent of the Island's electricity from the Energy Recovery Unit, which is quite good.

3.12.6 The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Two Parishes in the Island collect recyclables in a different way. Would the Minister confirm whether he has access to the figures those Parishes will have as a result of their exports and the receipts from their distribution of the recycling in his grand total?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

No, I do not have those figures.

3.12.7 The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Would the Minister not consider that would be very useful information and agree to work with particularly the Connétable of St. Helier and perhaps St. Saviour to get those figures?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I do not have those figures. I am not sure if the Department does. I will check.

3.12.8 Deputy K.F. Morel:

In his response to Deputy Ahier, I believe it was, the Minister mentioned the prices of cardboard and, indeed, when it comes to recycling the price of recycled materials features heavily in the Department's thinking. Would the Minister confirm whether, or not, the Department operates a policy of only recycling materials where it is economically viable from the perspective of very low or no cost to the public purse and, if so, does he consider that this policy in itself is an obstacle to the Island recycling more?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

No, it is not the only factor. I am not sure where we are with, for instance I mentioned AA batteries, *et cetera*, batteries are quite expensive, because they have to be removed and isolated from all goods down at La Collette prior to being deposited and, as we have newer battery systems coming on the Island now with the new battery systems, which cannot be crushed and must be separated, they have to be stored and sent off separately. But it is not the main factor, but zero charge is good.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

If I may, just for clarification, I asked whether it was the Minister's policy, the Department's policy, would the Minister clarify whether that is the case or not?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Sorry, I thought I just did. I said it is not the policy. We would have no objection to paying for certain items, but preferably at zero cost.