

2021.09.14

16 Deputy R.J. Ward of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding biodiesel fuel (OQ.188/2021)

Will the Minister inform Members of what percentage of the States of Jersey transport fleet and bus service has transitioned to using biodiesel fuel and, if this is not 100 per cent, explain why the use of such fuel has not yet been adopted by the whole fleet?

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

Although we have run trials in recent times, currently there is no use of second generation renewable diesel, S.G.R.D., in any of the Government of Jersey's vehicle fleet. However, we are in the final stages of discussion with procurement for an exception to the current liquid fuel contract. This will enable further use of second generation renewable diesel to the Government for our own fleet while a re-tender of the supply of liquid fuels is completed. The re-tender will include a requirement for a supplier or suppliers to be able to provide an ongoing supply of second generation renewable diesel within the procurement framework. The bus fleet is operated under contract to the Government by CT Plus Jersey Limited. The diesel fuel used by the entire CT Plus Jersey bus fleet is U.K. specification fuel, which incorporates a proportion of renewable diesel blended in. Although at 7 per cent of the volume, this represents a small percentage, this fuel is greener than the diesel imported for general road vehicle use in Jersey while avoiding being problematic for any bus engines whose manufacturers are unable to confirm as being compliant with S.G.R.D.

[15:15]

We are finalising the funding business case for approval to enable the use of S.G.R.D. to be supported within the bigger fleet of LibertyBus until 2024. We expect this funding from the Climate Emergency Fund to be approved by October 2020.

8.16.1 Deputy R.J. Ward:

I ask the Minister: would he trial, as a matter of urgency, the use of H.V.O. (hydrotreated vegetable oil) fuel in particular in school buses in order that the air that is emitted from those buses is much cleaner around school environments?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Also, I will just mention the buses have their own supply and that is 7 per cent renewable fuel mixed in with the fuel itself. I think I have mentioned previously that the bus company needs authorisation for their newer buses from the manufacturers to say that they are quite content for the new buses to run on second generation renewable diesel because they are enviro 5 engines. So they must have that authentication and I believe the bus company is waiting for that.

8.16.2 The Deputy of St. Martin:

The Deputy's question was quite specific and asked for a percentage of the States of Jersey transport fleet and bus service and the Minister's long rambling excuse did not mention a number at all. Could he tell us what the percentages are please?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I just did. If the Deputy was listening, we do not currently. Although we have run trials, we are currently not using second generation renewable fuel in our fleet, that is the Jersey Fleet Management, but we are renegotiating, shall we say, the contract to enable that to be supplied. So

we have run tests and the tests have come back as very positive. We have run it from small vans right the way up to the big tankers and the staff have reported back no loss of power, absolutely spot on and an excellent product, so we are more than happy to use that in our fleet but we have to renegotiate the contract. So, as I stated previously, it is zero in the fleet and the bus fleet itself, in their fuels, they have 7 per cent in all of the buses.

8.16.3 The Deputy of St. Martin:

Can I just ask the Minister why he has not been able to move faster at moving the States of Jersey transport group over to this fuel?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

We have contracts in place which must be amended and it is that amendment that we are working on at present until such time as the new contracts are out to tender.

8.16.4 The Connétable of St. John:

The Minister referred to the newer buses in the bus fleet needing permission to use the newer fuel. Will he not recognise that the school bus runs are performed by older buses in their fleet?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes, I am aware that the older buses are used in the bus fleet but, as I say, the fuel itself for the bus fleet does have 7 per cent renewable fuel so when all the buses are running on it, no doubt they will transition to the new fuel too.

8.16.5 The Connétable of St. John:

Would the Minister agree with me that having to pay 6 pence per litre on biofuel for environmental duty is not conducive to encouraging people to use the fuel? Having to pay £6 every time I fill up my car in environmental duty, I resent that fact but I still continue to do it. Will he work with his colleagues in Government to reduce that levy?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Absolutely, and congratulations to the Constable for using second generation biofuel in his vehicle and, yes, I have already mentioned this at the Council of Ministers and we have also had talks with Treasury regarding it.

8.16.6 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Is the Minister aware that, given that the diesel used in school buses in particular contains aromatic hydrocarbons, benzene, ethyl benzene and toluene compounds which, when burnt, produce by-products which are harmful to children's respiratory system? Indeed, there is evidence that it can pass between the spaces in D.N.A. (deoxyribonucleic acid) causing all sorts of cell dysfunction and, as a matter of urgency, we should be removing this fuel from our school buses and from around schools in as much urgency as we did lead from petrol. That is another lever to move towards renewable diesel so that we not only have cleaner air but our emissions reduce, or is the Minister happy to continue that level of pollution round our schools?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

As I have previously stated, we will get everything on second generation renewable biodiesel as soon as possible. There are contracts in place. There are contracts that need amending. LibertyBus is an independent company. They have their own contracts. They are very open to suggestions of electric

vehicles and second generation renewable diesel and they will be progressing as soon as they can. They are an independent company but we are talking to them on a regular basis and they are very keen to transition.