

22.03.01

1 Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding Review of the HCT group: (WQ.39/2022)

It is nice to ask the first question back in a more normal Assembly as well. Given his reported concerns over the speed at which green transport policies are being brought forward, will the Minister take urgent action to promote the use of biofuels as a transition step to allow time for infrastructure improvements enabling the implementation of those policies; and if not, why not?

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

For the avoidance of doubt, I fully support the use of second generation renewable biodiesel to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels during the transition to a low carbon transport network. In terms of taking action to promote the use of biofuels the draft carbon neutral roadmap makes several references to importance of biofuels as a transition fuel for the transport and heating over the next 10 years. In terms of action the Government is taking now, I am pleased to confirm that Government is supporting the use of second generation renewable diesel by LibertyBus; further details will be announced later this week.

3.1.1 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Given the significant rise in fossil fuels and diesel in the Island, is this not an opportunity because the differential between the 2 fuels is now down to about 30 pence a litre, where it was around 50 or 60 pence a litre, to take small action on the duty on those fuels, make them comparable and introduce this fuel as the day-to-day use for diesel vehicles on the Island? This is an opportunity and I would ask the Minister: would he take this opportunity now?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Absolutely. That is what we are aiming to achieve but we need to ensure - my team are working on this as we speak - to make sure there is an adequate supply of second generation renewable diesel. But, as I say, an announcement later this week and we are moving forward with this.

3.1.2 Senator S.Y. Mézec:

Is it not the case that actually if the Minister's move towards green transport policies went any slower they would be going backwards? Why can he not take urgent action now, as has been proposed by Deputy Ward on several occasions previously, to look at the duty which is charged on biofuels to make it more affordable and incentivise people now to start using it and not simply refer to some sort of intangible policy in the future?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

We are taking action; we have been taking action for some time. We have run tests with our own fleet down at Bellozanne; a selection of 9 vehicles we ran with second generation renewable biodiesel. No problems were reported so we are very happy with the product. As I say, we need to ensure we have adequate supplies of this product and that more announcements will be made later this week.

3.1.3 Senator S.Y. Mézec:

If it is the case, as the Minister says it is, that they have been taking action, can he tell us how many vehicles are now on the road using more environmentally friendly forms of fuel or energy than there were before and what action did they take to lead to those vehicles? I am not talking about

intangible policies. What have they actually done and what are the numbers of cars that are now on the road in a more environmentally friendly way than before?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I do not have that information because 90 per cent of these vehicles are private vehicles. I know that several garages on the Island are second generation renewable biodiesel and people are using this product. I have not had any adverse reports regarding the use of this fuel. We are very happy to roll it out. There is more work to be done regarding equalising the cost of second generation renewable biodiesel and regular diesel but that is something that is happening. There are ways.

3.1.4 Connétable A. Jehan of St. John:

Would the Minister agree with me that charging environmental duty on a biofuel is not a way of encouraging motorists to use that fuel?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Absolutely. It is a way forward. We must promote wherever possible second generation renewable biodiesel so I would support removing the environmental taxes from that fuel.

3.1.5 The Connétable of St. John:

Can the Minister explain what he has done to remove the environmental duty from a more environmentally friendly fuel?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

That is not in my gift to do that. That is not my department but, as I say, we are talking with other departments regarding taxation and environmental measures.

3.1.6 Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier:

In the light of the answer or non-answer we have just received, will the Minister consider taking action by discussing with the Minister for Treasury and Resources a reduction or a complete elimination of duty on this particular fuel?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

My team are on that as we speak. I am very keen on promoting second generation renewable biodiesel. I cannot add more to it than that. Anything I can do to promote it I will do.

3.1.7 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Where do I go? Can I ask the Minister, he mentioned heating fuel? Is he promoting the bio-heating fuel that is available on-Island and only requires a change to boilers of about £100 apiece of the burner in the boiler? What work is his department undertaking to try and promote that across the Island and thus address one of our main contributors to greenhouse gases on this Island, which is heating of homes?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Not too much regarding the home heating, I must admit. But that is not really part of my remit. But it is something I would encourage. The fuel supply firms are very much encouraged to use this and they are very keen to bring it in, so it is something we would encourage.