

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CHIEF MINISTER
BY DEPUTY M. TADIER OF ST. BRELADE
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 23rd OCTOBER 2023
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 30th OCTOBER 2023**

Question

“Further to the revised response to [Written Question 390/2023](#) will the Chief Minister state categorically whether she has been given, or has asked for, an indication of when the inquiry into the explosion at Haut du Mont and the inquiry into the collision of L’Ecume II are likely to be concluded; and will she advise –

- (a) how asking for anticipated timelines for these inquiries would constitute an “*improper*” influence of the process;
- (b) in light of her statement that the investigations need to be “*thorough and rigorous in order to reassure the bereaved families and [...] all Islanders*”, whether those families are being kept up to date with progress of the relevant inquiry and, if so, how; and
- (c) whether she anticipates that there will be separate public inquiries into either tragedy and, if so, what arrangements for the financial contingencies of such public inquiries have been made?”

Answer

I am clear that the timelines are a matter for the relevant investigatory and prosecutorial authorities and that, while the timely conduct of work is important, this cannot be at the expense of completeness. I have received a limited number of updates from my officials in respect of these inquiries, including their possible conclusion and, to date, I am comfortable that the arrangements in this respect have been appropriate. I re-state that it is not appropriate for the Chief Minister to anticipate in public when a criminal investigation might conclude.

(a) In my view, the Chief Minister asking for anticipated timelines has the potential to improperly influence a process. These are independent criminal investigations, and I respect that independence. If I were to request timelines, the relevant investigating authorities might consider that they are being placed under political pressure and/or feel obliged or influenced to abide by those timelines. The investigations must follow the evidence, not arbitrary timelines sought for political convenience. It is a very well-established principle in democracies that there isn’t any political involvement of any nature in criminal investigations.

(b) Since the Major incidents – the collision of L’Ecume II and the explosion at Haut du Mont – the bereaved families have been the main focus of the Police investigation and have been supported by their Family Liaison Officers (FLOs), who are dedicated and highly skilled officers in SOJP. The support provided to the bereaved families entails updating families, in a timely manner, with all relevant information regarding the police investigations, in line with the strategies outlined by the Senior Investigating Officers (SIO). These updates have been provided during meetings with the SIO and during private face to face meetings. The FLO’s have also provided information regarding additional services available for families, including signposting to support agencies, and explain Criminal Justice and Coronial procedures, so that they can access all available services and support.

(c) I do not believe that, while the investigations are underway, I should make, or indeed that I have sufficient information to make, a determination on the need or otherwise for a public inquiry, or in relation to financial contingencies.