

3.7 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains of St. Clement of the Minister for Economic Development regarding arrangements for local fishing vessels to be registered:

Would the Minister advise what arrangements, if any, are in place for local fishing vessels to be registered whenever those qualified and delegated to undertake this task, as indicated in R.12/2011, are on leave or otherwise unavailable?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean (The Minister for Economic Development):

I have investigated this matter and discovered that there has been a problem concerning a local fisherman only a few weeks ago. In this case the fisherman was fishing with an unregistered boat and was stopped by the States Fisheries Section and told he must have the vessel registered. It is illegal of course not to do so and crucially it is not safe until it has had its safety check carried out. The Fisheries Section did not take the hard-line option which they could have done in such circumstances by ordering the fisherman to destroy his catch. Instead, a more pragmatic approach required him to immediately register the vessel. From the time that he was stopped operating his unregistered vessel until the safety check was carried out was a total of 13 days. The Deputy will understand that the registration process, including a safety check on the vessel and its equipment, and legitimate checks on the applicant, as well as other legal and documentary tasks, takes time. Achieving this in accordance with the law and working with the applicant can indeed take some weeks. However, I am conscious that the Ship's Registry is a very small unit with effectively only 1½ staff to carry out the administration for all Jersey ships. I therefore accept that there may well need to be more than one person able to complete an urgent registration, and so I am asking for this to be reviewed. I would like to thank the Deputy for raising the issue. Thank you.

[10:45]

3.7.1 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

I am obliged to the Minister for his recognition of the issue because it was brought to my attention that when the person who normally does the work is unavailable, either on leave or whatever, then you have to wait until they come back and then further wait while they catch up on any work that was waiting for them before they left. Will the Minister now be ensuring that there are more people qualified to undertake the task and that the details of those people will be readily available so that those requiring the service do know who to contact as opposed to being told: "Well I am sorry, you have to wait 2 or 3 weeks"?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Certainly, as I have said, we will be reviewing the whole matter of registration. There are in fact, to put it into context for Members, approximately 50 new fishing boat registrations over a 3-year period. It is not high volumes but obviously this instance does raise a point that needs to be investigated. We will be reviewing the whole process to make sure that it is more streamlined in the future and a similar circumstance does not happen again.

3.7.2 Connétable P.J. Rondel of St. John:

I am concerned in the reply that we have had from the Minister. Being a former charter boat operator where we had our boats examined every year, this work was done in due form at a very short notice and you would have your certificate within several days, not running into weeks, so it is a real concern. Would the Minister ensure that you could have a much quicker turnaround i.e. within 7 days not in weeks or nearly months as he has indicated? Will he please give an undertaking?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

What I said was nothing to do with months. I mentioned that the process can take a few weeks, which was the case in this particular instance. I have also stated that we are going to review the

process to ensure it is as efficient and effective as it possibly can be. I do not think I can add much more than that.

3.7.3 The Connétable of St. John:

Given that this is all done through the Ports Department now that this has been farmed-off as another one of our quangos, will he ensure - and I mean ensure - that this does not slip down the list of things to do? This is urgent. This is people's livelihoods we are talking about.

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

This is not a quango. I do not know what the Connétable is referring to. I have already undertaken that we are going to review this matter. We will do so to ensure it is as effective and efficient as we possibly can and there is not much more that I can add to that.

3.7.4 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Does the Minister, with his new responsibility for reform of the States, not agree that this is a perfect example of red tape getting in the way of business?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Not necessarily until we have had a closer look at it. This may well just be an unfortunate but simple isolated incident. We need to get the facts, clearly, before we can form an opinion. In fact, I would have thought that the Senator would have been pleased to hear that the department only has 1½ posts in this area. We are trying to be as efficient and as effective as possible with a minimum number of staff but we need to make sure that we can deliver. Thank you.

3.7.5 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

One-and-a-half people is always difficult to imagine but I will do my best. Is it not the case that there can be other people within the department who are qualified to do this, who could step in as required, rather than having people dedicated to the job?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

The Deputy raises a good point and I think this is part of reviewing the process. It is all about process, quite often that a failure - if this can be described as a failure - should be considered. I think when we review it we will see indeed whether we need more staff or just a better process to ensure that this incident, or an incident like it, does not happen again.