

2018.03.19

6 Senator S.C. Ferguson of the Minister for Treasury and Resources regarding the appropriateness of Search and Rescue services being provided for commercial purposes outside the sea areas for which they were intended to be available: [OQ.49/2018]

Further to the response to Written Question 1/2018, will the Minister, as shareholder representative, advise what assessment, if any, Ports of Jersey have undertaken of the appropriateness of Search and Rescue services being provided for commercial purposes outside the sea area for which they are intended to be available?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean (The Minister for Treasury and Resources):

The simple answer to the question is none. This is because I am informed there are no search and rescue services provided for commercial purposes.

3.6.1 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Is Ports not aware that the States tug was custom-designed to provide equipment and power for salvage, life-saving, fire at sea and in the harbour - for instance, the fuel farm - pushing and shunting ships into their berths in cross-winds, and oil spillage - it has internal tanks for this - is Ports not aware of all this when they sent the tug to the west coast of Scotland to put down buoys in a contract with the R.N.L.I. (Royal National Lifeboat Institution)?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Of course Ports are very familiar with the capabilities of the Duke of Normandy, the States tug. I might add, so is the good Senator because I know she attended upon the Ports and spoke to the Harbourmaster at some length about the search and rescue capabilities of the assets available. But quite simply, search and rescue capabilities number around about 70. Jersey Coastguard has the job and the role of coordinating those assets. Some are dedicated assets, not the one in particular that the Senator has referred to, and others can be called upon as and when required. As far as generating revenues are concerned, the Duke of Normandy does undertake commercial work, not as I have already said, in the search and rescue area but it does undertake some commercial work in other locations after it has been risk assessed to see if it is needed on the station at a particular point in time. That is absolutely appropriate to offset some of the £800,000 or so running costs that are incurred by the Duke of Normandy each year.

3.6.2 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

I am informed by the fire service that the tug was custom-designed and if we have a fire at sea or if the fuel farm goes up, what use is the tug to us if it is up on the west coast of Scotland putting buoys down for the R.N.L.I.? Can we have an assurance that a vital part of our search and rescue service will not in future be spending extended periods of time in the Hebrides on charter to the R.N.L.I.?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

It does strike me that the Senator does not appear to like the R.N.L.I. I would suggest that, as I have already stated, there are something like 70 assets available for search and rescue capabilities around the Jersey territorial waters and that is absolutely appropriate. It is right that the professionals, so Jersey Coastguard, who is the coordinator, takes into consideration those assets that are required and considers when one of them is requested to do some commercial work elsewhere, wherever that may be, whether it is appropriate and safe for it to do so. That is exactly what happens. I am content that the professionals are running this service very appropriately.

3.6.3 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

That was a cheap jibe and I will protest about it because we only have one tug and if there is a fire at sea then lives are going to be lost. If we had had the tug in the Outer Hebrides or the Inner Hebrides, I am not sure which they are, when the Channiland went down we would have had a significant loss of life, and to make such jibes is cheap.

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

There is nothing cheap about the comments I made. Quite simply, it is an assessment by professionals that the necessary capabilities are available. It is risk-assessed, as I have pointed out. There are other assets, up to 70 in total, including in neighbouring jurisdictions, whether that be Guernsey, the United Kingdom, France, and those who coordinate search and rescue capabilities take into consideration all the factors to ensure that safety is of paramount importance and does not put anybody at risk. That is appropriate.