

21.03.23

22 Deputy K.F. Morel of St. Lawrence of the Minister for the Environment regarding Jersey's territorial limits for fishing (OQ.75/2021):

Will the Minister advise the Assembly as to whether or not Jersey's 3, 6 and 12-mile limits for fishing are both currently, and proposed in future to be, measured from the offshore reefs of Les Écréhous and Les Minquiers, or whether they are, and will be, only measured from the coastline of the Island of Jersey itself?

The following response was provided in writing in accordance with Standing Order 63(9) as the oral question was not asked before the end of the time allowed for Oral Questions:

The Deputy's question is a good one and one that I have had lengthy discussion with Officers from my Department and LOD on. I know there has been much interest from other members and the industry on this matter. The exit of the UK from the EU or the Trade and Cooperation Agreement has no impact on status of Jersey Territorial Waters. Not does it impact in any way on the sovereignty of the offshore reefs of Les Écréhous or Les Minquiers. All of this is established under International Law.

Jersey Territorial Waters are established as 12 miles from basepoint or median line as agreed. Jersey's exclusive and other fishing limits are those as set out in the Bay of Granville Agreement. Jersey has exclusive limits three miles from basepoints around the Island. Under the GBA, named French vessels can access Jersey Waters outside of that area including the offshore reefs. Additional restrictions on access were in place for the three to six area around the Island (known as zones A to D) whereby much more limited access was allowed. Under the GBA Jersey vessels had reciprocated access to area in the three- and six-miles area in French Waters (known as zones E and F). Under the TCA, whilst the GBA is superseded, access to areas under previous arrangements continue under the new one, albeit with a much tighter qualification criteria of more than ten days fishing activity in a qualifying period.

This is not an argument of sovereignty (that is firmly established), but one of access and use of marine resources. French fishermen have, for hundreds of years, together with fishermen from Jersey, fished in the shared Waters around the Island and neighbouring French coast, establishing a long history of co-habitation and co-operation, although admittedly strained at times. We must acknowledge this. However, the TCA is clear that the responsibility for maintaining a sustainable fishery is paramount and this rests with the Minister for the Environment in Jersey for ensuring this. I can give the Assembly my assurance that I will do all I can to exercise this duty based on sound scientific data and in a non-discriminatory way to manage our exploited stocks and the wider marine environment for the benefit of all and future generations.