

23.05.23

11 Deputy A. Howell of the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture regarding the operation of the Jersey Lifeboat Association's vessel (OQ.94/2023)

Further to the responses given during questions without notice in January and April this year, is the Minister able to confirm when the Jersey Lifeboat Association's vessel will be operational again; and if not, why not?

Deputy K.F. Morel of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity (The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture):

I would like to see the J.L.A.'s (Jersey Lifeboat Association) vessel back in the water as soon as possible, but the reality is the timing of that depends entirely on the J.L.A. itself. Under the Jersey Coastguards declared facility agreement management framework, the J.L.A. were engaged in a redeclaration process with Ports of Jersey. The aim is for the J.L.A. reacquiring its declared search and rescue asset status. Following that process, which took place, both an audit on 30th January and then a station visit on 2nd May, as I discussed in the previous answer to the question. Following that process it was clear that there were 5 items outstanding that the J.L.A. had to undertake to get back on to the water. Of those 5 items, since that process took place on 2nd May, 2 are now left outstanding. Those 2 are the provision of a valid insurance certificate and also the completion of the Bridge Management Framework. The Bridge Management Framework is now nearly complete, but needs to be finessed, so to speak, to be completed. Once those 2 items are delivered by the J.L.A., they will be certified to go back on the water. They then have another 60 days in which to complete several other items which are outstanding. The answer is it is nothing to do with me. It is entirely up to the J.L.A. to get themselves back on the water.

3.11.1 Deputy A. Howell:

I wondered if there is anything we can do to help the J.L.A. to get operational again.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

I suggest they phone their insurance brokers.

3.11.2 Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade:

Would the Minister agree that any organisation purporting to offer maritime safety services should be fully compliant with current maritime regulations, given that all existing operational agencies are obliged to do so?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

I thank the Connétable for his question. Yes, I entirely agree. It is one reason why people have erroneously suggested that I can order the J.L.A. boat be put back in the water. Number one, I do not have that power. Number 2, even if I did have that power, to exercise such a power without knowing whether all of the requirements that the Connétable refers to have been undertaken would be grossly negligent on the part of any Minister. Importantly, I do not have that power. However, I do expect the Harbours Authority to make sure that every organisation, whether it is the J.L.A., the R.N.L.I. (Royal National Lifeboat Institution) or any other meet those requirements.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I thank the Minister for his answer.

3.11.3 Deputy P.M. Bailhache of St. Clement:

Bearing in mind that the previous Government but one in the shape of the Chief Minister at the day and other Ministers were supportive of the establishment of the Jersey Lifeboat Association, that many hundreds of Jersey people have supported this organisation and that the crew trains regularly in order to get itself into a suitable state to form part of the lifesaving community. Is the Minister satisfied that Ports of Jersey Limited is doing everything that it can to get this lifeboat back into service?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

I maintain, again, in response to the question, the same as I did to the very original question, it is up to the J.L.A. to get themselves back on the water. The provision of a valid insurance certificate is, in my view, a fairly fundamental document that would be required of any organisation that wants to be a search and rescue asset in these waters. I have sat in meetings with both the J.L.A. and Ports of Jersey. I have made it very clear to both parties that they are to play this all with a straight bat. I expect no prejudice on any part. I have made that clear. Ports of Jersey know that. They have undertaken a process, the declared facility framework that I have mentioned, which was overseen by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency ... both parties, the J.L.A. and Ports of Jersey, agreed to that oversight by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency from the U.K., who very kindly donated their time to us to do that. I have no question in my mind that the process was fair and that Ports of Jersey are doing everything they can. However, what none of us can do is provide a valid insurance certificate on behalf of the J.L.A.; only they can do that themselves.

3.11.4 Deputy P.M. Bailhache:

I would be grateful if the Minister could answer the question: is he satisfied that Ports of Jersey Limited is supportive of the wish of the J.L.A. to get back into active service?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

I am satisfied Ports of Jersey is doing everything it can to make sure the J.L.A. get back into service, but they are not reaching their requirements of maritime standards in order to make that happen.