



The Jersey Lifeboat Association

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Office of the Lieutenant Governor
Sir Stephen Dalton GCB, BSc, FRAeS
St Saviour
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3rd July 2018

Dear Sir Stephen,

Royal National Lifeboat Institute (RNLI)
Jersey Lifeboat Association (JLA)

We respectfully write to you as Her Majesty's impartial adviser, representing the interests of the Crown.

We are concerned that an organisation operating under Royal Charter no longer maintains the ethical and moral standards that such an auspicious arrangement requires. We are requesting that Her Majesty ensures that promises made by the RNLI in November 2017 are adhered to, and that the States of Jersey, whose loyalty to her Majesty has never been in dispute, are requested to back a Committee of Inquiry into its own contribution to the unfair sacking of around 40 volunteers.

The St Helier Lifeboat Station has a long history of dedicated crews and effective fundraisers. Mr Andrew Hibbs, with his comprehensive knowledge of local waters, was a lifeboatman at RNLI St Helier for 24 years, 14 of those years as Coxswain.

In 2016 a complaint made against Mr Andrew Hibbs by the States Government run Ports of Jersey led to his sacking by the RNLI, without proper due process, and his crew walked out in his support. This false complaint by [REDACTED] was found to be unsubstantiated, an apology was issued by the RNLI, and Mr Andrew Hibbs was immediately reinstated. No action was taken against [REDACTED] that made the false allegation.

Further events led to unresolved issues and much publicity.

1. The RNLI invited the crew to a meeting on the 8th November 2017 to consider, as an option, the St Helier station transitionally converting to an independent facility.

The RNLI said;

"There is a phased approach should you decide to move this to an independent place, and the RNLI can support that, the States of Jersey can support that, the Coastguard can support that.

If you chose to stay with the RNLI equally we will support that as a grown-up way of doing things. The driver here has to be where you feel you can operate the best. Where you feel as a crew you can throw your passion and your values and your beliefs.

Where is that place? If it is the RNLI, that is obviously our preferred option, that is what we would like to see, and we will support you in doing that. If it's not then we will support you to do that as well, but what both decisions will be driven by people and individuals.

Where do you think you can operate best? Where do you think you can save the most lives? Because that is what we are all about. We will support you to do either one of those. This decision has to be made first and then you have to be reassured that you are going to get support from all the stakeholders to walk down the path you chose to walk down."

2. Statement from Crew on Monday 13th November 2017.

"Having held initial discussions with some of the Jersey stakeholders we would now like to explore further setting up an independent lifeboat station at St Helier. Clearly this is not something that can happen overnight and therefore we confirm that we will continue to operate with the RNLI under your policies and procedures to provide Search and Rescue for the Island of Jersey, until such time as Jersey has its own independent operational lifeboat service."

3. Dismissal of the crew and shop volunteers on Friday 17th November 2017.

On the 17th November 2017 the crew were invited to a meeting at a Jersey Government office – believing it to be a discussion about the transition process - and were summarily dismissed. Whilst at that meeting, with the full support of some Jersey Government employees and a few politicians, the locks were changed on the Lifeboat station, and the volunteers removed from the shop – which was closed. The lifeboat was taken back to Poole.

4. Refusal of Government to support Committee of Inquiry for fear of self-incrimination.

On the 21st March 2018 the States of Jersey Government refused to support calls for a Committee of Inquiry into the matter through fear of self-incrimination. It is our intention to request that the setting up of a proper Committee of Inquiry is debated again.

Whoever devised the plan to sack the volunteers (crew and shop) was devious. The crew were invited to a meeting at a States of Jersey Government building and were at this meeting when the Lifeboat was taken back to Poole, leaving Jersey without an all-weather boat and putting lives at risk. As part of the elaborate plan the mechanic had been sent on an errand.



The main benefactor in the purchase of the lifeboat had been advised previously the boat would be taken. The RNLI began to advertise for new crew almost immediately. Their devious real intention became clear.

The Jersey Lifeboat Association was set up to make good the promises made to the volunteers that had been tricked into dismissal. Personally, I have no interest in boats, but I do have an interest in moral and ethical standards – doing what is right. Our first action, in February 2018, was an offer by all the JLA trustees, at their own expense, to visit the RNLI to discuss a way forward. This offer was refused.

All efforts to meet with the RNLI have failed. In fact, they communicate to us through the local media. It is through these channels we learnt that they are considering legal action against the JLA over spent covenants, and the colour of our Lifeboat. They have made it clear that they have no intention of working on a transition.

The Jersey Lifeboat Association needs clarity in respect of the RNLI's intentions in respect of the St Helier Lifeboat Station. **Are the RNLI going to stand by the promises and commitments given to their crew on the 8th November, 2017?**

Certainly, they have given every indication that they have no intention of being an organisation that keeps its promises. If they are not an honourable and ethical organisation are they deserving of the maintenance of their Royal Charter?

Given the increasing number of disputes throughout the UK and the increasingly corporate nature of the organisation is it time for Her Majesty to order a full inquiry into their governance and treatment of volunteers?

Given the fact that Members of the Jersey Government and its employees are complicit in the above unethical developments is it time for Her Majesty to seek a UK independent Committee of Inquiry on this matter in the interest of transparency and justice?

The bare facts are that Jersey does not need two Lifeboat Stations operating from St Helier. Continuation of the RNLI Station is seen by many as a victory for deceit and lies.

The public of the Island is currently split on this issue. There are those that ignore moral standards and consider that the end justifies the means. They look at the RNLI as a wealthy institution with a reliable record in saving lives at sea. The 40 plus volunteers that were displaced to the JLA were, in their eyes, just collateral damage.

Others have a strong moral compass and believe that both Her Majesty's Government and Her Majesty's Lifeboat Association should act with the highest standards at all times. They consider that the sacked crew and volunteers have been appallingly treated by a charity operating under Royal Charter.

Our faith in institutions acting honorably and ethically is being tested by the responses we are receiving. We have therefore decided to copy this letter to interested parties listed below as part of a desire for an open and transparent discussion.



It is our contention that if the RNLI continues to operate the St Helier Station, despite promises made, that this reflects badly on the moral compasses of many tainted parties.

We look forward to your reply to the specific questions within this letter and shall be delighted to meet with you to discuss the matters raised.

Yours sincerely,



Ben Shenton
Chairman – Jersey Lifeboat Association

cc Her Majesty the Queen
cc The Chief Minister – States of Jersey

