

Jersey Harbour Authority

Maritime House,
St Helier, Jersey, JE1 1HB
Tel: +44 (0)1534 447788
Fax: +44 (0)1534 447799
Email: portofjersey@ports.je
Website: www.portofjersey.je



PORTS OF JERSEY
YOUR ISLAND GATEWAY

13th March 2018

Proposition 7/18: Jersey Lifeboat Service

Dear Senator Gorst,

I have been informed that the Council of Ministers will be considering its position on this proposition, and amendments made to it, at its meeting tomorrow. I thought therefore that it would be duteous of me to set out some key aspects of how the Harbour Authority has sought to approach matters with regard to the Jersey Lifeboat Association.

As you know, the Jersey Harbour Authority, which was constituted when Ports of Jersey was incorporated in 2015, has statutory responsibility for the coordination of search and rescue activity (SAR) within Jersey's territorial waters. The Safety of Life at Sea Convention is extended to Jersey and so we are a Coastal State for SAR purposes and work accordingly with all neighbouring countries.

This responsibility is reflected in a public service obligation placed on Ports of Jersey Ltd by the States in 2015, and which is written into the Incorporation Law. It is a responsibility that, as you would expect, we take very seriously indeed.

You will have seen the brief sent a week or so ago by the Harbour Master to all States members, in which he outlined the obligations adumbrated above and the key place within those of an effectual SAR system compliant with all relevant international rules and codes of practice issued by the International Maritime Organisation. He extended an invitation to all Members to visit the control centre at Maritime House to see for themselves how the Coastguard manages SAR coordination and I understand that a number of members have already taken this up.

There are two main points to make.

The first concerns the importance of regulatory compliance in respect of any SAR asset. This is not only about our international obligations but also our reputation as a Coastal State in our regional maritime community.

The Harbour Master has sought to provide clear compliance guidance to the Jersey Lifeboat Association. You will, I believe, have seen his initial letter sent to the Association just after Christmas 2017. He has since sent several further communications iterating his advice and asking to be kept informed of plans. He has also had one meeting with representatives of the Association. Save, however, for what is in the public domain, he has not so far been made aware of any detailed plans on the part of the Association. No doubt they have them in preparation but it needs to be emphasised that the process of ensuring compliance of any new facility will have to run its proper course so that the Harbour Master is, eventually, able to confirm that full compliance is assured. Where safety of life at sea is concerned there cannot be any shortcuts and if compliance is not, or has not been, assured then the given asset could not properly be called upon by the Coastguard in any incident situation.

While the Harbour Master will be helpful in assisting and guiding, ultimately it is up to the Association to develop their operational frameworks to the Harbour Master's satisfaction.

I should add, for the avoidance of doubt, that it is certainly not the case, for example, that there is at present any want of SAR assets; the Harbour Master has advised the Authority that, in his considered view, the current provision of assets is appropriate and adequate for reducing risk to seafarers locally to a level as low as reasonably practicable.

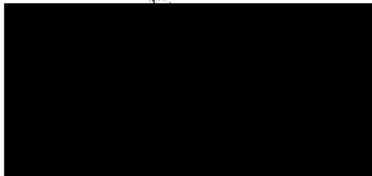
The second point concerns the diversity of our SAR asset base. The more diverse it is, subject to regulatory compliance and confidence in a sustainable operation, the better we are able to meet our international obligations and the more resilient the asset base is. One aspect of the upcoming States debate seems to point towards the notion that there may be a choice between one or other lifeboat service that can perhaps, in some manner, be mandated. That is not how things should be viewed. If Jersey is able to have more than one, fully compliant, lifeboat service then, other things being equal, our resilience is increased. Our judgement is that there is a real risk in forcing a decision so to speak between two services, the overall capability of SAR assets would be reduced and therefore exposes the Island to risk in both our safety at sea platform and our international obligations as a Coastal State. In any case, that remains a hypothetical question unless and until such time as there is full regulatory compliance for the putative second boat.

Thus it would be difficult for the Harbour Authority to contemplate supporting any change, were that to emerge from the upcoming debate as a likelihood or even a States decision, that led to, or sought to mandate, a choice having to be made between one lifeboat service or the other. If we can get to a position where there are two services which complement each other then Jersey's SAR resilience will be the greater, moving further ahead of the adequacy we already enjoy with the existing operation.

The Harbour Master is of course ready to offer you and the Council of Ministers any further advice you may wish to have.

I am very content for it to be placed in the public domain by you as its recipient, but I shall not be taking any action of my own in that regard.

Yours truly,



Chairman, Jersey Harbour Authority