

**STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY THE CHIEF MINISTER
ON TUESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2024**

Chief Minister regarding the States of Jersey Complaints Board report on the Jersey Lifeboat Association suspension.

Sir,

I want to begin by saying it is extremely regrettable that this matter has been allowed to persist for such a protracted period of time, involving as it does the Island's volunteer lifeboat organisations, Ports of Jersey, and the Government.

The Report of the Jersey Complaints Board provides a detailed account of the procedural and administrative concerns that have been expressed as part of this long running disagreement, and makes clear the strength of feeling of all those who have been involved.

Since the events detailed in that Report, all parties have made renewed efforts to ensure there are strong working relationships between all the organisations concerned.

A Water Safety Forum group has been re-constituted by Ports of Jersey. It met in May for the first time and includes members of all search and rescue organisations.

The aim of that group is to improve communication and create better cohesion, collaboration and understanding across the maritime rescue community.

Since taking office in January, I have visited both lifeboat teams at their harbour bases, met their volunteers and toured their vessels.

Their dedication to duty is unquestionable and both teams expressed a desire to move forward positively and collaboratively.

Sir, as all Members know, Jersey's maritime environment can present some of the most challenging conditions and we must not lose sight of that.

Our maritime rescue capability is critical to Island life and both the Jersey Lifeboat Association and the RNLi are crewed by some of our most courageous Islanders.

We all recognise that when it comes to the safety of lives at sea, we must ensure there is absolute clarity of understanding between maritime organisations.

Only with that clarity can we maintain the highest standards of governance, transparency and accountability.

The Government acknowledges the findings of the States of Jersey Complaints Board, and we have carefully considered their three recommendations.

With respect to communications between the Harbourmaster and Minister, we accept that all parties need to have a clear understanding of procedures and responsibilities, both legal and practical.

Should roles and requirements need further explanation in order to avoid similar disputes in future, then further discussions should be undertaken and, if necessary, the Public Service Obligation agreement with Ports could be amended.

The Minister for Sustainable Economic Development will continue to meet regularly, and as required, with the Harbourmaster, who reports on a range of maritime activities, including those undertaken by the Jersey Coastguard.

Finally, careful consideration is being given to the recommendation that complaints related to maritime public service obligations should be heard by the Minister. It is critical that alongside ensuring appropriate accountability, conflicts of interest must be also avoided, and the Minister will provide an update in due course.

Sir, the dedication to duty of all lifeboat teams is unquestionable and I know all parties share a desire to move forward positively and collaboratively.

As the States of Jersey Complaints Board acknowledges in its conclusion, progress has been made to ensure the Jersey Lifeboat Association remains a core asset in local search and rescue operations. And I am confident that Islanders are well protected in our coastal waters as a result.

This series of events has caused much disruption and has persisted for a long period of time, and for that I am sorry.

Given what we have learnt from the past and the strong progress that has been made by all involved, I hope we can now move forward in a renewed spirit of cooperation.

To those men and women who regularly put their own lives at risk and go to sea in the most treacherous conditions, to save lives, I would like to re-emphasise my apology.

Jersey is extremely grateful and proud of what they all do.

Thank you, Sir.