

**STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY THE CHIEF MINISTER  
ON MONDAY 12th DECEMBER 2022**

The past week has been one of the most difficult for our Island community in recent memory.

We have witnessed two tragedies in the space of just three days – one at sea, and one on land.

I am sure I speak on behalf of all Members in sending my heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of Michael Michieli, Larry Simyunn and Jervis Baligat who were on board the L'Ecume II fishing vessel when it was involved in a collision and sank off the north-west coast of the Island early last Thursday morning.

And we offer those same heartfelt sympathies to the families and friends of the five people who have been confirmed as having died in the explosion at Haut du Mont early on Saturday morning. Four people are still missing following the incident, and with the search now having moved from one of rescue to recovery, we must regrettably be prepared for more bad news in the coming hours and days

We also have a number of families who have been displaced and who are currently coming to terms with the shock of what has happened, having had to leave their homes in an emergency with only the clothes they were wearing

The immediate response of the Parish of St. Helier and Andium Homes to support those families was overwhelming and so greatly appreciated.

The thoughts and prayers of every single person in the Island are with those affected by these horrific incidents.

We will stand with them in support and solidarity, not just now, but in the coming days and months ahead.

As Members will know, Jersey is a community of seafarers with so much of our history, culture and identity intrinsically linked to the fishing industry.

We know that the sea can be dangerous, but nonetheless incidents such as the one we witnessed last Thursday are shocking, unforeseen, and desperately sad.

The fishing industry is closely knit, as was clearly demonstrated by the speed, nature and extent of the search and rescue effort at sea.

The authorities are working to survey and search the collision site, and importantly to recover the bodies of the three fishermen on board the vessel.

An independent investigation will piece together exactly what happened – and that picture will eventually become clear.

Whilst we wait for these processes to take their course, I know that our community will continue to support the families and friends of the captain and the two crew members in whichever ways are necessary.

One tragic incident is enough to shake a small community.

To have a second within a matter of days is not something we have ever experienced.

The devastating explosion at Haut du Mont has shocked everyone in the Island and around the world.

I am sure Members will have seen the footage, which makes for painful viewing, and is unprecedented for Jersey in modern times.

Put simply, most of us will have never seen anything like it

Alongside the ongoing recovery operation, a police investigation into the events that led to the explosion is underway.

Again, that investigation will be independent at every stage, and will provide the facts of what happened for the families and loved ones of everyone involved.

In times of adversity and, in these cases, disaster, people are often shown at their very best.

We would of course rather not have to deal with these events, but how we respond when they happen says a lot about our Island community.

In Jersey's case, and in respect of both incidents, the Island's care, compassion and community spirit has shone through.

It is a light in these dark times.

I would like to place on record my thanks and appreciation to everyone who has been involved in, and supported, the response efforts following Thursday's and Saturday's events.

We have been so fortunate to benefit from the skill, expertise and generosity of so many professionals, volunteers, and individuals from across the public, private and charitable sectors both within and outside the Island.

I want to particularly thank our neighbours in Brittany, Normandy, the other Channel Islands and the United Kingdom who have provided essential equipment and personnel.

I have similarly received so many kind messages and offers of support and assistance, from within Jersey and further afield, which again show the great will of everybody to do what they can to help.

And we now have the Bailiff's Island Appeal to provide a central focus for those who wish to make donations and help to support those involved in both tragic events.

Our emergency services train and prepare for these unthinkable incidents, and Islanders can be proud of the professionalism they have shown in responding, as they can be of all of our public servants.

That response is ongoing, and will very likely continue for the coming weeks.

Events remembering the victims will also continue to take place this week - where we can come together as a community to reflect and show our respect, and I am grateful to the Bailiff and the Dean for organising the vigil on Wednesday night.

I know that the people of Jersey will continue to respond in the compassionate, respectful and close-knit way we have seen in the past few days.

We will stand together, we will get the answers to what has happened, and we will honour the memory of those who have been so sadly lost in tragic circumstances.

I am happy to answer Members' questions, being mindful of the ongoing investigations