

EASING OF TENSIONS IN INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS WITH THE CHANNEL ISLANDS

MAISON DE LA NORMANDIE ET DE LA MANCHE REOPENS ITS DOORS IN JERSEY

Hervé Morin, President of the Normandy Region, Jean Morin, President of the County Council of la Manche and Jean-Marc Julienne, President of the Syndicat Mixte Maison de la Normandie et de la Manche, announced the reopening of the representation of Normandy and La Manche in the Channel Islands, from yesterday, 1 July 2021, following recent decisions by the government of Jersey to extend the fishing transition period until 30 September.

In reaction to the restrictive measures taken unilaterally by Jersey regarding the access of our fishermen to the territorial waters of the Bailiwick of Jersey, the Presidents of the Normandy Region, the County Council of la Manche and SMANM-Maison de la Normandie et de la Manche decided on 3 May 2021 to close their representation in St. Helier.

According to Jean Morin, President of the County Council of La Manche (Conseil Départemental de la Manche), "this strong decision demonstrates our institutions' commitment to the respect of Norman fishermen's historic rights ". Mr Morin thanks his predecessor, Marc Lefèvre, who initiated this action.

On Monday 28 June, the Government of Jersey announced the extension until 30 September 2021 of the fishing transition period, allowing French fishermen to work under the conditions that prevailed when the Granville Bay Agreements were in place (until 31 December 2020). 74 vessels (under 12m), from La Manche area, are affected by these provisional measures.

In the press release announcing the extension of the transition period, Ian Gorst, Jersey's External Relations Minister, expressed Jersey's desire to maintain good relations with its closest neighbours: "The relationship with France is hugely important to Jersey in so many ways. We know aspects of that relationship have been difficult recently, but want to ensure we work through the issues, fulfilling the terms of the TCA and ensuring the sustainability of fishing in our waters."

The Presidents of the County Council of la Manche, the Normandy Region and SMANM-Maison de la Normandie et de la Manche acknowledge this desire for appeasement: "In this circumstance, we would also like to make a positive gesture in order to initiate the process of restoring a relationship of trust with our Jersey neighbours, and are pleased to announce the reopening of Maison de la Normandie et de la Manche's office, our official representation in the Channel Islands".

However, there is no question of letting our guard down: "We do not forget that the situation is still not resolved permanently for our fishermen and we remain vigilant regarding the continuation of the discussions between Jersey, Guernsey, the United Kingdom, the European Union and France. They will have to find lasting solutions to the problems encountered by our fishing fleet since the introduction of the new post-Brexit licenses. It is now up to the European Union and the United Kingdom to decide, as soon as possible, on the implementation of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (post-Brexit agreement) in order to respect the political objective of continuity of the historical rights of Norman fishermen in Channel Islands waters while respecting the sustainable management of marine resources".

While the situation of vessels under 12 meters affected by the extension remains worrying, that of the new boats which started operating in 2019 and 2020, without proof of prior direct activity, is not taken into account at the moment: "For La Manche, this represents ten boats, forced to stay in port. This is unacceptable" protests Jean Morin," the notion of replacement vessel in CI waters must be taken into account in the TCA agreement".

Maison de la Normandie et de la Manche presence in the Channel Islands shows, since 1995, how important the cooperation with our cousins from the Bailiwicks of Jersey and Guernsey is for Normandy and La Manche, their elected officials and their inhabitants. The office helps dialogue between institutions and contributes to numerous cooperation projects (twinning, education, culture, economy...).

Maison de la Normandie et de la Manche, in St Helier, is open to the public, from Monday to Friday, from 9:30a.m. to 5:30p.m. The office houses a Tourist information Centre (specialised in the Normandy Region and La Manche County) as well as a shop of Norman products.

