

**BLUEPRINT FOR FUTURE COASTGUARD
ORGANISATION IN THE UK**

November 2011

1. Introduction

This document sets out in summary form the blueprint for the future shape of the Coastguard Service following the Government's decisions on Coastguard modernisation. The overall shape of the new Coastguard was announced, following an extended period of public consultation on 14 July 2011. The Government announced its decisions on a small number of remaining points on 22 November 2011 following a further period of consultation. This document covers both sets of decisions.

2. A Modernised Coastguard

The modernised coastguard service will comprise:

- A new **nationally networked coastguard function** coordinating rescues, running vessel traffic management arrangements where required and monitoring maritime activity around our coast. The network will be coordinated and managed from a new Maritime Operations Centre.
- A better supported **volunteer Coastguard Rescue Service** with some 3,500 volunteers operating, as now, in teams at 365 locations around the UK. These volunteers will continue to provide the front line cliff and coastal rescue capacity for the Coastguard.
- A continuing **Search and Rescue Helicopter capability**. The Government expects to announce its plans for the long term provision of a national Search and Rescue Helicopter service in the near future

The Coastguard service will also continue to work closely in the coordination of rescues with its Search and Rescue partners, including the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

3. The Nationally Networked System

The new nationally networked system will comprise:

- A single **Maritime Operations Centre** (MOC) manned by 96 regular coastguard staff divided into shifts to provide comprehensive 24 hours a day throughout the year. The MOC will act as a national strategic centre to manage Coastguard operations across a network of interlinked coastguard centres, as well as co-ordinating rescue activities for many incidents occurring anywhere around the coast of the UK on a day to day basis depending on demand and work levels in other centres. The MOC will generate and analyse a national maritime picture using information from a variety of sources. It will be based in a ready built operations centre at Fareham originally constructed as a Fire Control Centre.

- A **stand-by MOC** at the existing coastguard rescue coordination centre at Dover fully equipped to take on the MOC role but not normally manned for this purpose. The centre at Dover will have 28 staff divided into shifts, slightly higher than other centres given its responsibilities for the Channel Navigation Information Service (CNIS). This will enable it to handle a transition to MOC operations until additional staff can be brought in should the back up need to be activated.

- **Eight further centres**, all of which will be connected into the national network allowing the effective interchange of information and tasking between the MOC and these centres or between themselves. All these centres will be open 24 hours a day with a total staffing of 23 regular coastguards for each, divided into shifts. These networked centres will be based at the existing Coastguard coordination centres at:
 - Aberdeen
 - Shetland
 - Stornoway
 - Belfast
 - Holyhead
 - Milford Haven
 - Falmouth
 - Humber

The small centre at London, collocated with the Port of London Authority operations centre, and overseeing activity on the Thames will continue with 6 staff rostered to provide 24/7 cover.

Aberdeen will have some additional staff to handle liaison with the oil and gas industry.

4. A New Concept of Operations

Current Arrangements

The Coastguard manages around 22,500 incidents each year with marked peaks and troughs in activity related to geographical location, time of day and season.

Search and rescue emergency response is currently co-ordinated from 18 Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centres (MRCCs) with a very small centre in London co-located with the Port of London Authority (PLA).

The number and location of these MRCCs was largely driven by historical factors, together with the communication infrastructure and technological constraints at the time. The Coastguard principally communicates with mariners by radio telephony (R/T) and with others needing help, assistance or information through telephone systems including the UK national 999 (112) emergency system.

The R/T coverage is delivered via 154 coastal radio sites with multiple aerials to provide comprehensive radio coverage around the UK. These aerials are then grouped and connected into the closest of the coastguard centres, each of which is manned 24/7 by between 4 and 8 staff.

Each MRCC operates as the coordination centre for a defined locality. Limited resilience is provided by the operational organisation of these 19 centres into 9 'area' pairings (with Dover/Thames also being linked to London allowing each centre to cover for its pair).

This resilience only provides for sharing critical communications links between pairs. The majority of MRCCs are neither staffed nor equipped to provide full cover across a pairing. The coverage is also wholly dependent on some critical technology in each of the centres remaining operational even if a centre had to close down. In the event of a catastrophic loss of a centre and all its systems, all the functionality of that location (and its links to remote aerials) would be lost to the other station in the pair.

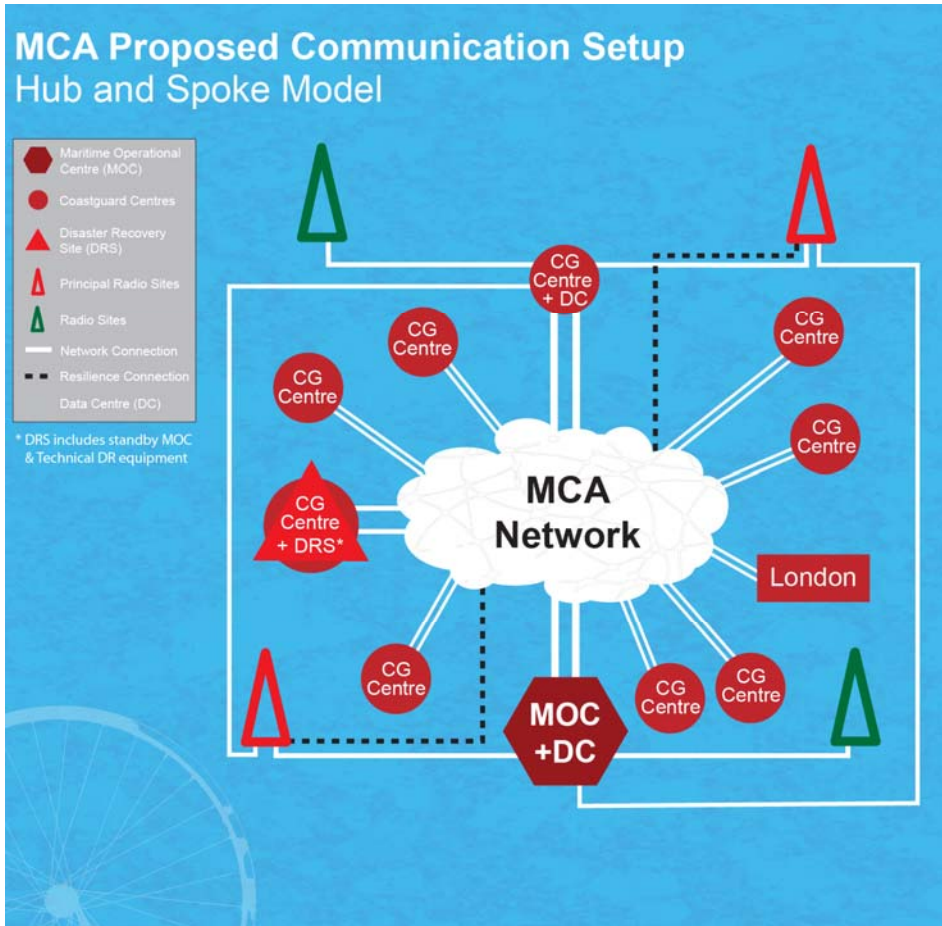
The current system therefore suffers from limited resilience, an inability to optimise loading on different centres, varying opportunities for Coastguard officers to practice and develop their professional skills and relatively high operating costs.

Future Arrangements

The modernised Coastguard structure will operate as a national network of 9 Coastguard centres with a single Maritime Operations Centre (MOC) at its heart, all operating 24 hours a day.

All regular Coastguards working in the new centres, wherever they are located, will use the same systems, have access to all the same data and be able to use

all available communication aerials and other links to communicate with those needing assistance. The future design will connect the existing radio aerial sites to centralised equipment located in two geographically separate locations; the MOC and all Coastguard Centres will connect to these systems. This will mean that operators anywhere within the network will be able to access any of the radio aerials, communication and management systems they need to carry out their operational duties as shown below.



Each Coastguard Officer will be trained in a wider skill set. This includes the broadening of site specific expertise across the entire workforce as well as the development of new competencies to address the emerging Coastguard missions such as growing Vessel Traffic Monitoring responsibilities.

As a single networked organisation the Coastguard will be able to deal more effectively with the seasonal and diurnal peaks and troughs of activity. Similarly, in the event of a major emergency, it will be possible to rapidly direct a greater number of officers to the task to ensure a capable and appropriate UK response. The MOC will provide the controlling centre for UK Coastguard operations and the focal point for other interested bodies to gain or share operational maritime information. It will ensure that tasks are distributed within the networked system to best effect and that the overall network and maritime picture are monitored at all times to maintain situational awareness, balance of work and service delivery. It will also have the capability to undertake a full range of tasks on a national basis.

5. Strengthening The Coastguard Rescue Service

The volunteer coastguard rescue service will continue to operate as today with 365 teams and a total of c3,500 volunteers trained and equipped to carry out coastal searches, cliff and mud rescues and to provide assistance for persons caught in river, flood or other water hazards. These volunteers provide the essential front-line rescue capability for the Coastguard Service turning out whenever needed to assist those in distress and support local communities.

The Coastguard Rescue Service will be strengthened by an increase of 50% from 64 to 96 in the number of regular officers available to the volunteers for operational attendance, leadership and advice.

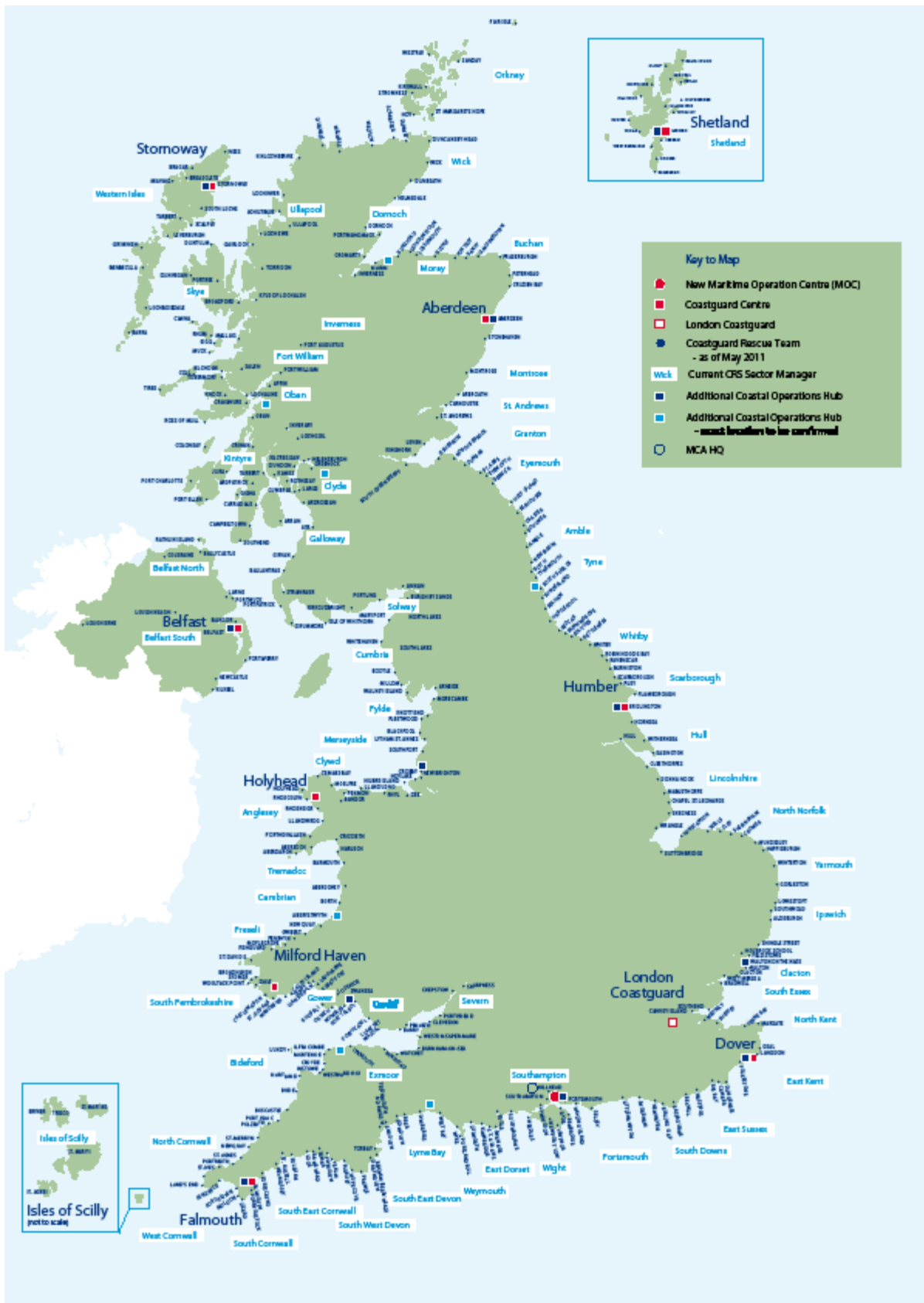
This will allow much more flexibility in the management, support and training of our volunteers. It will also give a greater presence of Coastguard officers in coastal communities and provide increased opportunity for interaction with other emergency services and coastal leisure and commercial bodies.

These regular officers will operate in teams with a focal point or operational hub. It is intended that these will be based in:

Existing Centres	Additional locations
Lerwick Aberdeen, Bridlington, Walton-on-the-Naze, Dover, Falmouth, Swansea, Liverpool, Belfast Stornoway.	Moray Firth Northeast England, Southampton/Portsmouth, Dorset, North Devon, Cardigan Bay, Strathclyde Oban/Fort William

The exact additional locations will be based on operational requirements and best use of MCA/government estate. These 18 bases will enable us to establish or maintain a strong Coastguard presence in these coastal locations. Currently we depend entirely on the local knowledge of our volunteers for detailed information concerning the coastline and coastal water activities where they live. We will continue to use the vital information the volunteers can provide, but a system of on duty/on-call officers will provide an additional resource to ensure that the changes we are implementing to the overall structure place no greater burden on our volunteers.

A map showing the locations of future Coastguard resources for both maritime coordination and Coastal Rescue is shown below.



6. Implementing the Changes

These changes will mean a reduction in the total number of regular Coastguards, including those working in the MCA headquarters and with the volunteers from 578 to 436. The numbers working in rescue coordination centres will fall from the current 473 to 314, a reduction of 159.

The changes will also mean that a number of existing rescue coordination centres will close. It is intended that the existing centres not included in the new national network will close in the following sequence.

MRCC to close	Provisionally by end of F/Y
Clyde	2012/13
Forth	2012/13
Solent	2013/14
Portland	2013/14
Liverpool	2014/15
Yarmouth	2013/14
Brixham	2013/14
Thames	2014/15
Swansea	2014/15

Both the dates and sequence of closure will be driven by operational requirements during the implementation of the programme and, as such, are subject to ongoing review.