

# HOUSE OF COMMONS TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE

## MEMORANDUM: PROGRESS ON THE COASTGUARD MODERNISATION PROGRAMME

This note sets out progress on the programme to modernise HM Coastguard. It provides an update on the implementation of the new HM Coastguard structure that was described in paragraphs 1-48 of The Coastguard, Emergency Towing Vessels and Maritime Incident Response Group: Follow up: Government Response to the Committee's Sixth Report of 2012-13.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmtran/1018/1018.pdf>

### Background

1. On 22 November 2011 Ministers announced the final blueprint for the modernisation of Her Majesty's Coastguard, comprising a National Maritime Operations Centre (NMOC) in Fareham and 24-hour Coastguard Operations Centres (CGOC) in Stornoway, Shetland, Dover, Aberdeen, Humber, Falmouth, Belfast, Milford Haven and Holyhead, and the small unit in London. The number of full time regular Coastguards giving direct support to the 3,500 volunteer Coastguard Rescue Officers (CROs) in coastal communities would increase from 64 to 96.

2. The key elements in the modernisation programme are:

- Establishing the communications and information systems to underpin a national network allowing workload to be managed nationally rather than locally, enabling the NMOC and all CGOCs to coordinate any incident around the UK Coast.
- Completing the new facilities for the NMOC at Fareham, including the main operations room and training facilities.
- Delivering a disaster recovery capability at the CGOC in Dover.
- Establishing two data centres at Fareham and Aberdeen.
- Defining and grading new Coastguard roles, identifying training requirements and developing training programmes.
- Agreeing the terms and conditions for coastguards within the new structure.
- Transitioning the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres (MRCC) at Falmouth, Holyhead, Milford Haven, Humber, Aberdeen, Shetland, Belfast, Stornoway and Dover to their new role as Coastguard Operations Centres (CGOC).

- Closing the MRCCs no longer required at Forth, Clyde, Great Yarmouth, Solent, Portland, Brixham, Liverpool, Swansea and Thames.
- Recruiting existing or new staff into the different roles within the new structure. Incrementally ramping up the NMOC, CGOCs and enhanced management regime for the volunteer Coastguard Rescue Service.
- Maintaining a robust search and rescue coordination capability throughout these changes.

3. The front line rescue capabilities provided by Coastguard Rescue Teams, lifeboats, search and rescue helicopters and other rescue assets are unaffected by these changes and will continue to provide services coordinated by coastguards at the NMOC and CGOCs.

### **Progress Update**

4. Good progress is being made in all these areas; the Coastguard Modernisation Programme is on target to meet the implementation timetable announced in September 2013.

5. The Testing of the core command, control and emergency response systems started in July 2013. These operational systems are now subject to site, user acceptance and operational testing which is on target to be complete by August 2014.

6. Good progress has been made on a collaborative project with the Ordnance Survey to add over 6,000 vernacular place names not already known to their dataset. This new information is now available for coastguard incident working. Priority was given to the Clyde, Forth and Great Yarmouth areas prior to their closure.

7. Disaster recovery technology is being developed at the NMOC and will be deployed to the CGOC in Dover in line with the programme timetable.

8. Equipment is in place ready to establish the two data centres at the NMOC and Aberdeen.

9. The Government has delivered its commitment to provide new and better Coastguard jobs, properly rewarded to reflect the demands of a modernised HM Coastguard structure, helping to attract and retain the highest quality of staff.

10. The new Coastguard roles introduce new functions and responsibilities with enhanced skills. They have been tested against the HM Treasury Job Evaluation (JEGS) methodology and are appropriately graded and rewarded. Recruitment to the new roles started in November 2013.

11. As a result of the close and productive working relationship between MCA and PCS new terms and conditions covering areas such as allowances, leave and shift working were agreed in September 2013. The PCS General Executive Committee recommended acceptance of the offer to its members which was subsequently endorsed by a 79% vote in favour. As a result the PCS ended Industrial Action Short of Strike concerning Coastguard pay that started in May 2007. These arrangements are consistent with the Government's plans under the Civil Service Reform Plan to modernise employee terms and conditions.

12. However, developing and negotiating those new terms and conditions necessarily slowed progress and in September 2013 Ministers announced a revised closure and transition timetable for existing Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres.

13. The plan compared to what was announced in November 2011 is set out at Annex A. The Programme is on target to meet this revised timetable.

14. In November 2013 the MCA conducted an alignment exercise, comparing the existing and new Coastguard roles. Due to the increased responsibilities of the new jobs, no existing front line coastguards could be aligned to those roles. As a result, the majority of existing coastguards have been put "at risk" and have needed to apply for the new jobs to remain with the organisation.

15. The first phase of recruitment was launched in November 2013. This process is phased to incrementally deliver the right number of coastguards at the right stage of the transition timetable. All new Coastguard posts were advertised and we had over 750 applications for the 416 Coastguard jobs.

16. At the same time, to support the NMOC becoming operational in September 2014, we externally advertised for Maritime Operations Officers (MOO) to be located at the NMOC. 24 successful candidates for these roles are now training.

17. As at 31 May, from a required complement of 416, 258 job offers (62%) have been made under phase 1 of recruitment which has now ended. 234 job offers (56% of the complement) are existing experienced Coastguards. This figure will continue to increase as the next phase of recruitment progresses. Training for existing Coastguards successful in obtaining a new role will be shorter than for new recruits.

18. Recruitment under Phase 2 for the remaining 158 posts is now well underway. We are confident that phase 2 recruitment for these posts will be completed by December 2014. More details of recruitment plans and timelines are at Annex B.

19. Training for the externally recruited MOOs at the NMOC started at the end of March 2014. A clear and comprehensive training plan for all officers in the new structure has been developed to the end of the transition timetable. Training requirements have been profiled for each role, and include the variety of programmes needed for individuals.

20. A training timetable has been programmed for the MOO (Maritime Operations Officer), SMOO (Senior Maritime Operations Officer) and SCOO (Senior Coastal Operations Officer) roles. The training for the remaining roles are still to be finalised but delivery schedules and options have been developed.

21. Good progress is being made on setting up the new shift management arrangements, which will be trialled and tested before going live in August 2014. Work is also being carried out to finalise the work patterns for the management roles at the NMOC and CGOCs so that they fit together for maximum cover.

22. Throughout these changes MRCCs continue to operate the existing HM Coastguard structure prior their transition or closure. Effective coordination services continue to be maintained with no reduction in search and rescue capability.

23. The current nationwide situation whereby some MRCCs are staffed below risk assessed levels is a legacy of previous uncertainties which led to difficulties in retaining and recruiting staff. A table outlining how many shifts have operated at below risk assessed levels, per MRCC, over the last six months is at Annex C.

24. Where we encounter difficulty staffing to risk assessed levels we consider factors such as the level of experience available, likely maritime activity given the time of day and weather conditions to guide what response is appropriate. As a result, when necessary, we use tried and tested mitigation measures to maintain operations:

- the long standing pairing arrangements which enable each MRCC to be connected to at least one other which is available to provide mutual support;
- increased overtime amongst MRCC staff ; and
- Coastguards on detached duty.

25. Senior management closely monitor these situations and take appropriate mitigation action to manage risks. An outline of the Risk Assessed Watch Level process is outlined at Annex D.

26. To support the staffing of the existing structure HM Coastguard ran numerous recruitment campaigns throughout 2013; this resulted in 37 additional Coastguards being recruited. These campaigns offered jobs on a two-year fixed term basis, using the pre-modernisation role profiles, grading and pay levels. It is no longer feasible to recruit into existing (pre-modernisation) roles at MRCCs before the new national network becomes operational, as all available training resource is now devoted to the new jobs.

27. There are particular local recruitment and retention challenges at Liverpool, Thames, Aberdeen, Shetland, Dover and Humber. To help address these local issues in the implementation of the new structure, we are externally recruiting Maritime Operations Officers at these locations remaining open. Recruitment into the new roles is progressing and we plan to be at complement when the respective CGOC becomes part of the new national network.

- **Liverpool and Thames** – Retention at closure stations is understandably difficult, however mitigation measures are in place to incentivise staff to remain in post up until closure. HM Coastguard has also looked to augment staffing levels through secondments from other MRCCs. Also at Liverpool HM Coastguard have proactively recruited former Coastguards on fixed terms contracts.
- **Aberdeen and Shetland** – HMCG are in direct employment competition with the Energy Industry which pays higher salaries. We anticipate that the salary rates for the new Coastguard roles will be more competitive in the local job markets;
- **Dover** – It has been extremely difficult to recruit under existing salary rates. We anticipate that the salary rates for the new Coastguard roles will attract more people to apply for jobs in this area; and
- **Humber** – The incorporation of the former Yarmouth MRCC “area of operations” into Humber’s area of operation resulted in an increase in the number of staff needed on watch to meet risk assessed levels. Whilst we addressed this by transferring three members of staff from Yarmouth to Humber MRCC, one of these has since left the service. There have also been three retirements due to medical reasons..

**Department of Transport**  
**10 June 2014**

## Closure and Transition Plans

1. The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) has closed the MRCCs in Forth, Clyde and Great Yarmouth with their responsibilities transferring to Aberdeen, Belfast and Stornoway, and Humber respectively. By utilising its current systems and pairing arrangements, HM Coastguard has maintained operational capability and the quality of search and rescue service. There is no evidence to suggest that any incident has been mishandled since these MRCCs closed.

2. After the provisional timetable was set out in November 2011<sup>1</sup>, the Government launched the Civil Service Reform Plan to modernise employee terms and conditions. This slowed progress in settling revised terms and conditions for new Coastguard roles and Ministers agreed and announced a revised closure and migration timetable in September 2013. The Coastguard Modernisation Programme is on target to meet this timetable.

Location	Provisional Closure Dates	Transition Date	Closure Date
MRCC Forth	F/Y 2012/13		Closed September 2012
MRCC Clyde	F/Y 2012/13		Closed December 2012
MRCC Yarmouth	F/Y 2013/14		Closed May 2013
NMOC		September 2014	
MRCC Solent	F/Y 2013/14		September 2014
MRCC Portland	F/Y 2013/14		September 2014
MRCC Falmouth		October 2014	
MRCC Brixham	F/Y 2013/14		November 2014
MRCC Holyhead		December 2014	
MRCC Liverpool	F/Y 2014/15		January 2015
MRCC Milford Haven		February 2015	
MRCC Swansea	F/Y 2014/15		March 2015
MRCC Humber		April 2015	
MRCC Thames	F/Y 2014/15		June 2015
MRCC Aberdeen		July 2015	
MRCC Shetland		August 2015	
MRCC Belfast		September 2015	
MRCC Stornoway		October 2015	
MRCC Dover		December 2015	
London CG		December 2015	

3. The transition and closure process ensures that when a MRCC transitions into the new 'National Network' back-up and support is available from NMOC and other CGOCs already

<sup>1</sup> Provisional dates for MRCC Closures only, by financial year, were announced in November. The announcement outlined that the dates and sequence of closure would be driven by operational requirements and as such were subject to ongoing review.

within the National Network. MRCCs scheduled to close will do so once its paired MRCC has transitioned into the National Network.

4. The MCA is actively supporting staff with one-to-one engagement, and guidance on the assessment and training processes. The MCA is committed to taking as much skill and experience from existing Coastguards into the future as possible.

## Staffing Transition

1. The Future Coastguard staffing transition plan is necessarily complex because it must balance the implementation of the new structure and ways of working with the need to maintain existing search and rescue operations.
2. The recruitment and training workstreams are phased incrementally to deliver the right number of officers at the right point in the transition timetable. Through a blend of both internal and external recruitment sufficient experienced staff will be trained and in post to support the National Maritime Operations Centre and National Network becoming progressively “live” from September 2014.
3. The age demographic of Coastguards in existing MRCCs is skewed disproportionately and 27% are over 55 years of age and therefore less likely to consider applying for a new Coastguard role. The current Voluntary Redundancy (VR) rules allow for staff over 55 to use some or all of any compensation payment to buy-out the actuarial reduction in their pension caused by retiring early.

### Recruitment

4. The position as at 31 May 2014 is as follows:

Role	Complement	Phase 1 Job Offers	Phase 2 Vacancies
Maritime Operations Officer (MOO)/Senior Maritime Operations Officer (SMOO)	260	158	102
Maritime Operations Specialist (MOS)	29	9	20
Maritime Controller (MARCON)	19	8	11
Maritime Commander (MARCOM)	6	4	2
Senior Coastal Operations Officer (SCOO)	78	58	20
Coastal Area Commander (COAC)	18	16	2
Coastal Divisional Commander (CODC)	6	5	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>158</b>

5. Due to the requirement for SMOOs to hold a qualification only offered by HM Coastguard the recruitment pool for these roles is limited to existing Coastguards and qualified MOOs. Therefore we have planned to over complement on MOOs with phase 2 vacancies for SMOO filled by existing Coastguards and MOOs, recruited either internally or externally, who are subsequently successful at SMOO assessments.

6. As well as the 24 MOOs undergoing training at the NMOC the MCA advertised for a further 24 external MOOs at the end of April 2014; the provisional allocation being 12 at

NMOC and 12 between Dover, Humber, Aberdeen and Shetland where there are existing recruitment challenges.

7. Phase 1 recruitment completed (pending health and medical checks) at the start of May 2014 and phase 2 is well underway. All phase 2 MOO vacancies have been advertised both internally and externally; priority will be given to at-risk staff. To ensure there are appropriate staffing levels for when the NMOC and first CGOCs become operational priority interviews will be given to staff at Solent, Portland and Brixham.

8. Phase 2 MOS vacancies have been advertised so that the successful candidates can partner and work with the new entrant MOOs throughout training.

9. Recent positive engagement has confirmed that some existing staff who have not previously applied for roles, or were unsuccessful in phase 1, wish to apply again. This is particularly evident at the Solent and Portland sites.

#### Voluntary Redundancy (VR)

10. The MCA is also running a Voluntary Redundancy scheme, available to all Coastguard staff regardless of whether their MRCC is closing. Applications have been assessed against criteria to ensure that operational effectiveness is not put at risk. An appeals process is available. This approach has been agreed with the PCS Union. Staff will be notified of the outcome of their application at the earliest opportunity.

11. Significant numbers of staff opted for VR at an early stage of the applications process. However, it is evident that many did so in order to hedge their bets whilst simultaneously or subsequently applying for new posts. The figures below reflect this duality.

12. As at 31 May 2014 there have been 249 applications for VR in total (MRCCs, Sector manager and HQ). Of these 40% are over 55 years of age. Of the 249 applicants 94 have applied for a new Coastguard role while 61 have been offered a new Coastguard role pending a medical.

13. Of this total there have been 91 applications for VR from MRCCs that will close. Of these 43% are over 55 years of age. Of the 91 applicants 17 have applied for a new Coastguard role while 9 have been offered a new Coastguard role pending a medical.

14. There have been 124 applications for VR from MRCCs that will migrate to a CGOC. Of these 30% are over 55 years of age. Of the 124 applicants 62 have applied for a new Coastguard role while 47 have been offered a new Coastguard role pending a medical.

Phase 2 Recruitment Timeline

		w/c 10/3/2014	w/c 17/3/2014	w/c 24/3/2014	w/c 31/3/2014	w/c 7/4/2014	w/c 14/4/2014	w/c 21/4/2014	w/c 28/4/2014	w/c 5/5/2014	w/c 12/5/2014	w/c 19/5/2014	w/c 26/5/2014	w/c 2/6/2014	w/c 9/6/2014	w/c 16/6/2014	w/c 23/6/2014	w/c 30/6/2014	w/c 7/7/2014	w/c 14/7/2014	w/c 21/7/2014	w/c 28/7/2014	w/c 4/8/2014	w/c 11/8/2014	w/c 18/8/2014	w/c 25/8/2014	w/c 1/9/2014	w/c 8/9/2014	w/c 15/9/2014	w/c 22/9/2014	w/c 29/9/2014	w/c 6/10/2014	w/c 13/10/2014	w/c 20/10/2014	w/c 27/10/2014	w/c 3/11/2014	w/c 10/11/2014	w/c 17/11/2014	w/c 24/11/2014	w/c 1/12/2014	w/c 8/12/2014
Phase 2	MARCOM/ CODC	Advertise Role		Sift and notify results					Interview Day 1		Interview Day 2 - 16th May	Feed back opportunity	Job Offer		Health Check		T&Cs issued																								
	MARCON/ COAC	Advertise Role		Sift and notify results								Interview	Feed back opportunity	Job Offer		Health Check	T&Cs issued																								
	MOS/SCOO				Advertise Role						Sift and notify results	Interview		Job Offer 23rd May		Health Check		T&Cs issued																							
	SMOO				Advertise Role									Sift and notify results		Interview		Job Offer		Health Check		T&Cs issued																			
	MOO - Internal				Advertise Role						Sift and notify results		Interview	Job Offer		Health Check		T&Cs issued																							
	MOO - External				Advertise Role		Sift and notify results		Ability Tests if req'd	Interview		Job Offer		Health Check		T&Cs issued																									

### Staffing Below Risk Assessed Levels

1. It should be noted that this 6 month period coincides with the launch of the first phase of recruitment for the new Coastguard roles. Assessments for these roles started in January 2014 and the MCA has encouraged staff to apply for these jobs to ensure the maximum level of experience is maintained in the new HM Coastguard structure.

2. Where this has affected risk assessed staffing levels HM Coastguard have used tried and tested mitigation measures to maintain operations.

Month	Watches per Month	Shetland	Aberdeen	Humber	Thames	London	Dover	Solent	Portland	Brixham	Falmouth	Swansea	Milford	Holyhead	Liverpool	Belfast	Stornoway
Dec-13	62	3	33	30	33	0	21	7	10	5	3	21	2	0	15	11	13
Jan-14	62	1	14	25	21	0	19	5	2	1	0	10	5	0	7	6	5
Feb-14	56	4	16	22	25	0	17	3	8	0	5	6	5	0	11	5	5
Mar-14	62	2	28	21	37	0	28	10	7	1	10	2	6	2	8	8	6
Apr-14 <sup>2</sup>	60	2	36	32	44	0	36	16	5	6	13	4	12	8	30	40 <sup>3</sup>	12
May-14	62	0	38	19	23	0	46	30	31	1	13	30	18	6	8	22	14

<sup>2</sup> This period included Easter when RA levels for this period were increased

<sup>3</sup> For a period during April 2014 5 Coastguards recruited during 2013 were undertaking training and examinations off station. All of these Coastguards have successfully completed their training and are part of the watch bill.

## **Outline of the Risk Assessed Watch Level Process**

1. The risk assessed watch level assessments err strongly on the side of caution. They do not reflect the improvements HM Coastguard have made to resilience at an area level through the introduction of the Radio Equipment Replacement (RER) arrangements as part of the development towards a truly national approach.

2. Currently there are three levels of risk assessment at play:-

- Level 1 is an assessment by the Watch Manager who will consider risk factors including the level of experience available in a Watch judged against the likely maritime activity given the time of day, weather conditions and other factors. Given our current level of vacancies in some Centres, this may well fall short of risk assessed levels of manning and if the Watch Manager cannot resolve concerns through offering local strategies such as overtime, they may then escalate concerns to the next level.
- Level 2 is an assessment by the relevant Rescue Coordination Centre Manager who will work with their paired Centre Manager to re-assess risks using the long-established but now more resilient pairing arrangements which allows one Centre to provide mutual support to another. The Centre Managers will use their combined Coastguard experience, skill and knowledge to make a professional judgement about the level of risk across their patches against the level of combined competence and experience at their disposal. That professional judgement will consider the full risk picture rather than simply the number of people available. Any continuing concerns will be escalated to a level 3 assessment.
- Level 3 assessments will include the nominated Duty Area Search and Rescue Officer who will take a view of the risks across the paired Centres and arrange for a third (and other centres if needed) to use the dial-in facility that is now available to us to provide additional support to the paired Centres.

3. Once the new structure becomes operational a new national Risk Assessment model will be implemented which reflects more flexible shift patterns and the ability to manage workload nationally rather than locally.