

10th August 2011

William Powell, AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA



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*Croesawn ohebiaeth
yn Gymraeg a Saesneg
We welcome correspondence
in English and Welsh*

Dear *Will*

RE: P-04-328 MCA Modernising Coastguard Proposals

Thank you for your letter dated the 14th July 2011 in relation to the above-mentioned matter.

The tourism product in Pembrokeshire and indeed in much of West Wales is founded on the experiences provided from visiting the coast and inshore waters of the county. Despite the current economic climate there are a number of factors working together to increase the numbers of people, both visitors and local people, using the coast for recreational purposes and this use has inevitable safety implications. For visitors, the provision of an acceptable balance between experience, risk and safety is one of the 'givens' of a holiday in the UK and security and safety may in fact be important in deciding to holiday in Wales.

Factors that may increase the importance of the Coastguard Service in Pembrokeshire include:

- The current emphasis on coastal access stemming from government policy and specifically linked to the development and promotion of the Wales Coast Path. While Pembrokeshire has had its own Coast Path for many years, we may expect to see an overall increase in coast path use as part of the promotion of the Wales Coast Path. Coastguards become involved in apparently routine incidents of broken ankles on the Coast Path because their local knowledge (including knowledge of access points and landowners) and 4 wheel drive vehicles allow them to reach places where the Ambulance service is unable to provide support. The Park Authority works closely with the Marine Coastguard Agency (MCA) and follows up on reports of accidents on the Coast Path to look for ways to maintain the path in a safe condition.
- The Marine Leisure Industry is at present suffering the same static trading conditions as experienced in most other sectors, but leading specialist economists anticipate a start to recovery from 2012 onwards (source: Marine

Leisure Conference, 2010, Dun Laoghaire). In the last seven years the number of moorings on the Milford Haven Waterway has increased from 1020 to 1160. There is a waiting list for berths at Neyland Marina and looking to the future we may expect a significant increase in inshore water use from new marinas proposed at Fishguard (450 berths) and Pembroke Dock (250).

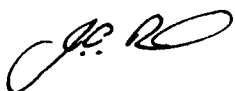
- The promotion of Wales as both an activity holiday destination and an area for wildlife watching. Both of these are key themes of ongoing Visit Wales initiatives and both are likely to see increases in activities on the cliffs and inshore waters.
- The South West Wales Recreation Audit <http://www.walesactivitymapping.org.uk/> shows the level of use for a wide variety of activities around the coast of Pembrokeshire. The number of new uses in recent years includes coasteering, kite surfing, parascending and sit-on-top canoeing. The last of these in particular is showing a significant increase with 89% of used sites recording an increase in the last 5 years. This is an area where the NPA believes that joint work with MCA to produce information about opportunities for safe use may be worth pursuing.
- Specifically we have seen increases in adventure activity companies in the area (there are 32 registered with the Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter Group) and in marine sightseeing companies.

Coastguards are regularly involved with canoe, climbing and coasteering rescues and if we want to promote these activities for their economic and health benefits we need to be able to maintain a balance of safety and risk. In terms of a preventative and educational role the Coastguard in Milford Haven host an annual cliff climbing group which has for many years considered climbing safety on what are some of the finest sea-cliff climbing venues in Europe. Coastguards have been involved with both the Marine Code and Outdoor Charter groups and with a personal watercraft monitoring initiative managed by the Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum.

In terms of bigger shipping and tourism the Coastguard also has a significant role. With two regular ferries into Pembrokeshire and an increasing number of cruise ships stopping in Fishguard and Milford Haven to send their passengers ashore, the provision of safe navigation information and a quick response in the event of an emergency is critical for the reputation of the area. Likewise, with something like one third of the UK energy imports coming into Milford Haven, the importance of managing shipping cannot be overstated. In the event of a major oil spill as experienced in this area in 1996, having senior Coastguard staff based locally with high levels of local knowledge is essential for the coordination of a quick response to limit damage and to coordinate clear up of any resulting spillage. Once again, a clean and safe coast is a basic foundation for the type of tourism that South West Wales depends upon. Having a fully staffed and locally coordinated Coastguard presence is a key element in the package of services.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Councillor JA Brinsden
Chairman, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority