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Your ref. • Ffôn cyfeirnod P-04-328

My ref. • Ffôn nghyfarnnod

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Chair, Petitions Committee
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Dear William

P-04-328 MCA Modernising Coastguard Proposals

As I'm sure you are aware, events have overtaken this petition. I am delighted that the UK Government has decided to retain the coastguard station in Milford Haven.

Milford Haven is one of the largest ports in the UK. Its refineries produce twenty-five percent of the UK's petrol and diesel requirements. Up to thirty percent of the UK's gas requirements can now be processed at its liquefied natural gas terminals. On average there are ten large ship arrivals every day as well as numerous pleasure craft entering and leaving the Haven waterway. Clearly any incident involving these types of vessel, particularly those which carry oil or liquefied gas (the like of which we have already experienced in Pembrokeshire), is going to be significant. It was never acceptable to expect the response to an emergency of this scale to be coordinated from a remote location.

Local knowledge and relationships also play a crucial role in coordinating smaller scale search and rescue operations (Pembrokeshire is a popular destination for leisure boating and many other types of coastal activity). It is imperative that staff processing emergency calls are able to ask the right questions at the right time in order to ensure a successful outcome.

On a more general point, I believe the financial assumptions that were built into the original proposals. While it was reasonable to assume that some efficiencies could be achieved by reducing overheads in Milford Haven and elsewhere (to the detriment of the local economy in those localities), it was also highly likely that costs would rise in other areas. The consultation document implied there will be some investment in physical infrastructure, but it was rather vague on the scale of capital works that would be required. More worryingly, it was clear that the success of the new structure hinged on the resilience of a nationally networked communications system. Experience would suggest that such systems are nearly always more difficult and expensive to implement and operate than originally anticipated.

Yours sincerely


Cllr John Davies
Leader

