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Research and Planning Branch
The Maritime and Coastguard Agency
Bay 3/20, Spring Place
105 Commercial Road
Southampton
SO15 1EG

Our ref:
4 March 2010

Dear Sir

Consultation on Search and Rescue Provision in the Southern Part of the South West Peninsular

This response to your Consultation on Search and Rescue Provision in the Southern Part of the South West Peninsular is the formal response of South Hams District Council.

It is clear that the MCA has gone to great lengths to justify the removal of the MCA Boat from Hope Cove, including working with the RNLI to provide a Beach Lifeguard presence at Hope Cove Outer during the peak season.

However the consultation document is factually incorrect in its assumption that the RNLI are providing the Beach Lifeguard service at Hope Cove Outer in 2010. This decision had not been taken when the consultation document was published.

It is important to make the point that South Hams District Council is not the landowner of Hope Cove Outer Beach and as such, was placed in a very difficult position in 2009 when the RNLI offered the free of charge Beach Lifeguard service. It was difficult because to not accept such a generous and public spirited offer would have been indefensible had there been a problem at Hope Cove which might have been dealt with by RNLI Lifeguards. However there was considerable local opposition to the RNLI's offer as it was seen as part of a larger strategy to remove the MCA's rescue boat.

The Council, on 28 May 2009 resolved that the RNLI's offer to provide a free beach lifeguard service at Hope Cove Outer be accepted for a 12 month period; that such provision was part of a general commitment to enhance the overall level of local beach and water safety, including the retention of the coast guard boat and that the situation be reviewed before the 2010 season.

Following the meeting of the Council's Executive on 4 March 2010, the Council's position has not changed from 2009. The Council would not wish the free provision of the RNLI's Beach Lifeguard service to jeopardise the future of the MCA's Boat at Hope Cove. The Council would see one as complementing the other.

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Small coastal communities are extremely proud of their heritage and have for many generations provided a wealth of volunteers to provide an array of rescue services to people who get into difficulties on and along our dangerous coastline. The people of Hope Cove are no different. The MCA and RNLI provide volunteer services manned by volunteers from the community and this bond and community spirit should not be underestimated.

Therefore, in response to the Consultation, South Hams District Council does not support the withdrawal of the MCA boat from Hope Cove.

Yours faithfully

Cllr R J Tucker
Leader of the Council

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