

[Your Name]

[Your Address]

[Date]

[MP Name]

House of Commons

London

SW1A 0AA

Dear [MP Name],

Re: The Future Resilience of the Coastguard Rescue Service

I am writing as your constituent to ask for your support in seeking parliamentary scrutiny of changes recently announced by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency regarding the future operating model of the Coastguard Rescue Service.

Following the Court of Appeal judgment in *MCA v Groom* [2026] EWCA Civ 6, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency has announced that Coastguard Rescue Officers will move to a volunteer-with-expenses model from mid-September 2026. Hourly remuneration for training and operational activity will cease. The Agency has stated that this change will protect the future strength and resilience of the service and will support the ability of people to serve alongside their primary employment. Many serving Coastguard Rescue Officers believe the opposite may be true. Parliament should examine the evidence before implementation is complete.

The Coastguard Rescue Service is part of the United Kingdom's emergency response infrastructure. Around our coastlines, Coastguard Rescue Officers respond to cliff incidents, missing person searches, mud rescues, flooding, and a wide range of situations where lives are at risk. The public expectation is simple: when someone is in danger on or near the coast, a trained and capable response will be there.

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency is a Category One responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, sitting alongside police forces, fire and rescue services, and NHS ambulance trusts. The public does not distinguish between those services. They see emergency responders. Parliament may therefore wish to understand why one Category One responder is moving to a wholly unpaid frontline operational workforce while the others are not.

The current payment received by Coastguard Rescue Officers is modest, broadly in line with the National Minimum Wage. For many, it does not reflect the full value of what they give. But it does allow officers to look their families in the eye and point to something tangible in return for the nights away, the cancelled plans, and the annual leave taken to attend week-long training

courses. It is an acknowledgment. Its removal is not a neutral event for household finances or for family goodwill, and family goodwill is what makes long-term voluntary service possible.

The MCA has stated that the revised model will protect participation by people with primary employment and family commitments. Many Coastguard Rescue Officers believe the opposite is more likely. Removing remuneration makes participation less accessible to young families, lower-income households, self-employed workers, and anyone who cannot readily absorb the cost of taking unpaid leave. That tension sits at the heart of this decision and has not, as far as can be established, been tested against evidence.

There is a further question that Parliament may wish to examine. The Court of Appeal found that the existing arrangements gave rise to worker status in law. The MCA's chosen response has been to replace those arrangements with a new volunteer model under which remuneration will cease. Many observers will see parallels with dismissal and re-engagement practices, and Parliament may wish to understand the legal basis upon which the transition is being implemented, including whether the September 2026 timing bears any relationship to employment law provisions expected to come into force in October 2026.

The MCA's own announcement stated that the transition period will allow the organisation to understand the impact of these changes. That is a candid acknowledgment that the full consequences are not yet known. Implementation is scheduled to begin before that understanding is complete. For a service that depends on experienced, geographically spread volunteers in remote coastal communities, that is a serious concern. Operational competence, local knowledge, and team trust take years to develop and cannot be quickly replaced if people leave.

I would be grateful if you could raise the following questions with the Secretary of State for Transport.

What evidence supports the conclusion that the revised model will strengthen the resilience of the Coastguard Rescue Service, and will that evidence be published?

Has a formal impact assessment been carried out regarding recruitment, retention and operational capability across different coastal regions, and if so will it be made available to Parliament before mid-September?

What alternative operating models were considered, including a paid or part-paid model, before this decision was reached?

What assessment has been made of the specific impact on remote and rural coastal communities where teams are smaller and recruitment is harder?

Was the September 2026 implementation date influenced in any way by forthcoming changes to employment legislation, and what legal advice informed the chosen timetable?

What measures will be used to monitor operational readiness following the transition, and at what point would the MCA consider the change to have had an unacceptable impact on public safety?

Has the Government formally endorsed this change, or was the decision taken solely at agency level without ministerial direction?

The Coastguard Rescue Service has protected lives around our coastline for generations. The people who staff it do so out of genuine commitment to their communities. A decision of this scale, affecting emergency response capability on every coastline in the country, deserves transparent assessment and parliamentary scrutiny before implementation is complete.

I would be grateful for your support and for any action you are able to take on behalf of the communities that depend upon this service.

Yours sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Contact details]

References: MCA v Groom [2026] EWCA Civ 6, Court of Appeal, January 2026. MCA CEO announcement to CRS workforce, June 2026. Civil Contingencies Act 2004, Schedule 1.