

Rescue Assets – Channel

Maritime Surface Assets

- HM Coastguard task Border Force and RNLi surface assets to respond to small boat distress in the Channel. Border Force undertake the majority of those taskings (circa 89%).
- RNLi declare a capability to HM Coastguard for its entire lifeboat fleet across the UK. To date the RNLi have not amended that declaration of capability in the Channel, they have confirmed they will launch their lifeboats to distress situations.
- Fatigue amongst lifeboat and border force crews is a growing concern. The impact of this is that RNLi lifeboats may come 'offline' for a short period to create time for rest periods and maintenance. Alternative flank lifeboats can be tasked.
- HM Coastguard on the 2nd December will be leading a multi-agency event to discuss and tabletop potential scenarios around limited availability of maritime surface assets and what therefore the contingencies need to be. That event will be attended by HM Coastguard, RNLi, Border Force (maritime and land), Clandestine Threat Command, Bristow, 2Excel and Coastguard Rescue Service.
- An important point is that in the event of a scenario whereby there are reduced surface assets, we can broadcast a mayday relay to any vessel in the area to respond.
- There are logistical challenges within the Tug Haven that creates "queuing" to disembark migrants from lifeboats or delays with Border Force staff getting to lifeboat stations outside of Dover, for example Dungeness. This delay will considerably contribute to the fatigue amongst RNLi crews rather than just the rescuing of migrants.

Air Support

- We are working to provide an increase air presence in the Channel to further support situational awareness for HM Coastguard coordinators (Separate Submission due to go to the Minister this week). This will include an unmanned Drone and Fixed Wing air support. (Drone expected December and additional Fixed Wing May 2022)
- We have arranged increased Helicopter support whilst the above comes online, again to aid with situational awareness.
- Our current Fixed Wing provision will still fly to support situational awareness until the new arrangement is fully imbedded.

Operations

- HM Coastguard have a permanent Coastguard Liaison Officer at the Joint Control Room in Dover to facilitate collaborative working between other agencies on small boats.
- We have also invested an extra 24 staff at Dover Coastguard Station creating a specific migrant response cell with a dedicated migrant commander to oversee operations. This will come online April 2022.