

For MCA Sponsorship Board December 2021 Meeting – Paper 2.1
Chief Executive’s High-Level Commentary

From: Brian Johnson

Date: 1 December 2021

Summary

1. The Agency’s latest Performance Report is presented separately as is a summary of our financial position. This meeting is just one day after the MCA Board’s December meeting and there are many who attend both gatherings. You will understand the similarity of my report to both bodies.

Recommendation for Action

2. That the MCA Sponsorship Board notes and discusses the matters raised in this paper.

Strategic Matters

3. The Agency is pushing a safety culture up its agenda. Although the absolute number of reportable accidents (mostly involving volunteer Coastguards) is small and mostly concern slips, trips and falls, there are too many of them for comfort when the hours of exposure to risk is taken into account. We have improved our safety training and safe behaviours are enshrined in our behavioural expectations. We have made the reporting of “near misses” easier. We are forensically examining local data in the Coastguard Rescue Service to see what more can be done.

4. Work has started on the next version of our internal three-year business plan “The Big Picture”. The main themes are taking shape and reference is made to them in the draft external Business Plan that is also on the Sponsorship Board agenda.

5. We await the outcome of the Spending Review for the MCA. We hope that DfT Finance will begin to engage with us during December. In addition to the ongoing Spending Review, the Cabinet Office are saying that they would like to see Civil Service headcount down to 2016 levels. It is not clear how this fits with Spending Review targets and our ability to secure the capability and capacity we will need for the future, nor how the Cabinet Office intends to approach this.

6. A useful meeting was held with the Chief Executive of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) regarding the need for the MCA and HSE to work together in a much more integrated way in the future to address the issues of use of new fuels in ports. She was very receptive to the need, and we will seek to engage more fully in the New Year.

7. The implementation of the new Vision 5 Coastguard incident management system has been delayed. Final testing prior to systems upgrade uncovered further bugs to be resolved by Capita. The upgrade is now most likely to happen in January.

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Agency Risks

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12. Migrant boat activity in the Channel has been intense and very much in the news headlines. There is a risk that our coordination function gets overwhelmed multiple calls. To mitigate that risk, operations at Dover have been heavily reinforced. To make the best use of available rescue assets, fixed wing aircraft flying hours are maximised on “red days” to give the best possible operational awareness. Permission has been given by the CAA to fly the Bristow rotary wing drone over the Channel and it is being moved to Dover.

13. A possible deal to deliver further fixed wing capability to the Channel operations has been agreed with Bristow. This would involve the purchase of existing unused Police reconnaissance aircraft by 2Excel. Procurement process has been covered off and the payment for this facility is being discussed with both DfT and Home Office with the hope of signing contracts by Christmas and mobilisation by end March.

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Annexes

Annex A – Agency Performance Report
Annex B – Finance position