Written Questions

Sarah Wollaston (Totnes, Conservative)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the construction and use requirements are for rescue boats to be classified by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency as approved vessels.

Michael Penning (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Roads and Motoring) Transport)

Rescue boats that are operated by commercial entities or where the organisation is not wholly voluntary are subject to the requirements of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) Workboat Code (or the Police Boat Code if the boat is operated by a Police Authority.

There are no specific requirements relating to the construction or use of rescue boats used by wholly voluntary organisations which are not declared as facilities for Search and Rescue.

Declared facilities are facilities that have been designated as being available for civil maritime SAR according to a specific standard or set criteria as agreed with the MCA. The authority providing this facility is responsible for:

- declaring the standard of capability and availability for each facility;
- maintaining each facility to the standard and availability declared by the authority;
- informing the appropriate Coastguard Rescue Co-ordination Centre when there is any change in the declared standard or availability of each facility;
- informing the appropriate Coastguard Rescue Co-ordination Centre of any reason for not making any facility which has been requested by the Coastguard.

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To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the Maritime and Coastguard Agency issues guidance to operators on the construction and use requirements of their rescue boats.

Michael Penning

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) has produced a Rescue Boat Code which is in circulation in draft form. The draft code covers design, construction, inventory and operation
and is considered to represent best practice when advising potential voluntary rescue boat operators and when assessing independent lifeboats that seek declared status as search and rescue (SAR) assets when they are being operated by wholly voluntary organisations.

Until the code is finalised, the MCA is willing to advise prospective operators on the standards it requires to include a rescue boat in the co-ordination of UK SAR.

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