

The D class lifeboat, which is highly manoeuvrable, fast and can get close in to the rocky shoreline, is ideal for covering rescues in the area and is not a 'downgrade' to the B class Atlantic 75 currently at St Abbs. The D class is a very capable boat and there are no restrictions in terms of working with search and rescue helicopters or transferring casualties. It's regarded as the workhorse of the RNLI, and has over 50 years' proven service in a range of demanding conditions and coastlines.

We also considered other factors, including the future sustainability of the stations and concluded that, as a larger town, Eyemouth would be able to support a larger crew in the future. Eyemouth already has a pool of 20 crew – enough to comfortably support two lifeboats.

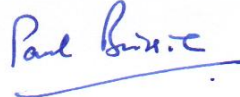
While cost is not the driving factor in these decisions, the RNLI has a responsibility to its supporters to use their donations appropriately, so it is a consideration. The current B class Atlantic 75 *Dorothy and Katherine Barr II* lifeboat was placed on service in 2002 and would be due to be upgraded to a bigger Atlantic 85 in 2016. This would require significant future investment in building works and alterations to the lifeboat station in order to house the lifeboat and provide appropriate facilities for the crew. The predicted costs would be more than £1.5M.

In particular reference to your concerns about diving, I recognise that it is a potentially dangerous sport. However, diving deaths are thankfully relatively few – 11 in the UK in 2013 out of 263 diving incidents. Our records show that last year St Abbs launched four times (out of a total of 16 services) to divers and in the last five years, on average, the crew launched to divers between two and three times a year. This does not represent a significant portion of St Abbs services and can be safely covered by Eyemouth lifeboat.

Research conducted by the British Sub-Aqua Club (BSAC) in 2009 indicated that 70% of incidents involving divers were potentially avoidable. We already educate sea users in order to prevent accidents and drownings through our Community Lifesaving Teams who use comprehensive action plans to tackle specific issues in specific areas. We hope to continue this work in St Abbs, alongside the community, to provide a service that helps divers stay safe.

Bearing in mind these factors, our decision to close the lifeboat station is final. I empathise with the crew and recognise that this is incredibly disappointing for them, but it is my duty as Chief Executive to make sure the RNLI provides the most effective rescue service that it can.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Boissier
Chief Executive