

## Water Rescue Capability

A comprehensive review of the emergency services' ability to deal with all forms of water rescue was announced today.

The review, led by Paddy Tomkins QPM, former HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary for Scotland, will work with a range of stakeholders to report to Ministers with recommendations on whether Scotland's water rescue response may be improved.

The review will examine:

- The resources and capabilities of all agencies currently involved in water rescue emergencies, including flooding
- Whether there is a need for changes in current operational arrangements between responders
- Whether there is a need for a change in the law covering the responders who cover water rescue
- The level of public awareness and education of the risks associated with open water

Currently a wide range of agencies, including police, fire & rescue services, mountain rescue teams, HM Coastguard and the RNLI could be called upon to undertake a water rescue, with the response in many cases involving several agencies.

Views will be actively sought from all these agencies for full consideration by Ministers. Any proposals for legislative, or operational/practice change would be taken only after a full public consultation.

Minister for Community Safety Fergus Ewing said:

"Water rescue is a dangerous area of response for our emergency services, and Scotland's unique geography provides additional challenges.

"It is an area of rescue where co-ordination remains critical, so it is only proper that we undertake this review to ensure we have the right capability, supported by the right legal framework. The people of Scotland deserve and expect no less."

David Wynne, Chair of the Chief Fire Officers Association Scotland added: "I welcome the Minister for Community Safety's announcement of a full review of Scotland's water rescue arrangements.

"While current arrangements are robust, I believe there remains scope for greater clarity on roles and responsibilities. I look forward to working with Paddy Tomkins to provide the Minister with a detailed picture for his consideration"

Water rescue capability currently covers flooding, coastal water, streams, gorges, lochs, canals and abandoned industrial works

Scotland has: more than 27,000 lochs; over 11,800km of coastal water; and more than 120,000 km of rivers and streams.