



2 January 2024

**UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL THURSDAY 4 JANUARY 2024**

## **RNLI 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary to receive official worldwide recognition by UNESCO**

- **The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has confirmed it will officially recognise the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) in 2024.**
- **The RNLI's Chief Executive describes the recognition as an 'immense honour' for the charity.**
- **The RNLI, the United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO (UKNC) and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) will work together in 2024 to deliver drowning prevention messages globally and help save lives.**

Following ratification at the UNESCO General Conference, the UN agency has confirmed it will endorse the lifesaving charity's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary because of the RNLI's international reach and recognition, and how it reflects the ideals, values and cultural diversity of UNESCO.

The RNLI has been saving lives at sea since it was founded on 4 March 1824. Today, the charity operates 238 lifeboat stations around the UK and Ireland, including four on the River Thames, and has seasonal lifeguards on over 240 beaches around the UK. It designs and builds its own lifeboats, and it runs domestic and international water safety programmes. Since it was founded in 1824, its lifeboat crews and lifeguards have saved over 144,000 lives.

The UK Delegation to UNESCO – part of the UK Government's FCDO – and UK National Commission for UNESCO proposed the RNLI's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary be recognised. The proposal received support from the UNESCO delegations of Ireland, Tanzania and Bangladesh.

This means the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the RNLI is now included in the list of global anniversaries that UNESCO will officially be associated with in 2024-2025.

The organisations will work closely throughout 2024 on a range of domestic and international opportunities, such as working with UNESCO designations, including World Heritage Sites, Biosphere Reserves, Creative Cities and Global Geoparks across the UK and overseas, to help promote drowning prevention messages.

RNLI Chief Executive, Mark Dowie, says:

'It is an immense honour for the RNLI's 200 years of lifesaving to be recognised by an organisation with such global significance as UNESCO.

'For two centuries, the RNLI has continued to save lives thanks to the commitment of its people – its lifesavers and supporters – and so this recognition is really a tribute to their courage, dependability and generosity, which have made the charity into the world-class lifesaving organisation it is today.

'It is significant that, in our 200<sup>th</sup> year, we have this opportunity to amplify the reach of our drowning prevention messages in the UK, Ireland and internationally. Every other minute, someone in the world drowns – this is a shocking fact and one which we are determined to change. This partnership will help us to deliver vital water safety messages worldwide. Our founder, Sir William Hillary, had a truly global vision for a lifesaving service, and this recognition in the RNLI's 200<sup>th</sup> year would no doubt make him proud – as it does for all of us who save lives at sea today.'

Anna Nsubuga, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to UNESCO, says:

'Around the UK and Irish coast, the RNLI brings together communities and supports the many people that live, work and visit our stunning coastlines.

'While many of us recognise the invaluable work the RNLI does around our shores, we should be proud of the impact of the RNLI's work globally, supported by the FCDO – from education and sharing critical expertise, to influencing governments and implementing policy.

'Our thanks go to the UNESCO delegations of Bangladesh, Ireland and Tanzania for supporting this nomination, and the teams at the RNLI and the UK National Commission for UNESCO for making this prestigious award happen.

'I look forward to a year of celebrations in 2024, a fitting tribute to the RNLI's universal stature, the integrity of its guiding principles, and the genuine difference it has been making saving lives for the last 200 years, and will continue to make in the 200 to come.'

United Kingdom National Commission Secretary-General, James Bridge, says:

'We are delighted that the RNLI has received this prestigious recognition from UNESCO to mark its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

'The RNLI is a treasured institution, and its lifeboat stations and crews are an integral part of communities around the British coast including many UNESCO designated sites, from the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site in Dorset and East Devon to the North West Highlands Global Geopark in Scotland.

'But its work goes far beyond the boundaries of the UK, supporting communities internationally through vital education and training programmes, and this work contributed to the RNLI's anniversary receiving global UNESCO recognition.

'We are looking forward to working with the RNLI and our partners throughout the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary year to deliver critical life-saving messages to those communities around the world most at risk from drowning.'

In 2014, UNESCO listed a number of the charity's early records in its UK Memory of the World Register <https://unesco.org.uk/portfolio/memory-of-the-world/>.

For more information on the RNLI's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary, visit [RNLI.org/200](https://www.rnli.org/200).

### **Notes to Editors**

- The RNLI will be marking its official 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 4 March 2024. A range of media opportunities will be available. More information will follow nearer the time.

### **Media contacts**

For further information, please contact:

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- UKNC: John Carmichael, Communications and Marketing Manager, on [jcarmichael@unesco.org.uk](mailto:jcarmichael@unesco.org.uk) or 07928 002460.

### **About the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI)**

The RNLI is the charity that saves lives at sea. Its volunteers provide a 24-hour search and rescue service around the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland coasts. The RNLI operates 238 lifeboat stations in the UK and Ireland and more than 240 lifeguard units on beaches around the UK and Channel Islands. The RNLI is independent of Coastguard and government and depends on voluntary donations and legacies to maintain its rescue service. Since the RNLI was founded in 1824, its lifeboat crews and lifeguards have saved over 144,000 lives.

### **About the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**

UNESCO is a specialised agency of the United Nations, aimed at promoting world peace and security through international cooperation in education, arts, sciences and culture. It commemorates historic events and anniversaries of eminent personalities and organisations.

### **About the United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO (UKNC)**

The United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO supports the UK's (including its Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies) contribution to UNESCO and brings the benefits of UNESCO to the UK.

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