

Big Issue: Dangerous Seas

Many people think spending time by water is relaxing, but the power of the sea can be very strong. Gale force winds, freak waves and rises in the tide can sometimes make the coast and ocean a very dangerous place. The Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) is a charity that provides a 24-hour lifesaving service around the UK coastline.

Visit a lifeboat station

Visit Seahouses Lifeboat Station (open daily, <http://www.seahouseslifeboat.org.uk>) or Amble Lifeboat Station (open for pre-booked group visits, <http://www.amblelifeboat.org.uk/>). Find out as much as you can about the work of the lifeboat crews and the rescues they have done.

- Most RNLI crewmembers are volunteers. Why do you think the crew offer to work without getting paid?
- Rescues can happen at any time. How do you think the crew feel if they are called out in the middle of the night?
- Even though lifeboats can be launched in less than ten minutes, it can still take time to get to the rescue site. How would you feel if you were stranded waiting for the boat to reach you?



Compose your own RNLI sea shanty

Sailors on old ships traditionally sang songs called sea shanties. A leader would sing the verse, with all the sailors joining in for the chorus. The words formed a rhythm that matched the work they were doing. One of the most famous shanties is What will we do with the drunken sailor? – if you don't know it ask an adult to sing it to you.

- Choose a rescue story from the Seahouses or Amble lifeboat station. You can read about recent Amble shouts here: <http://amblelifeboat.org.uk/shouts/>, or the famous Grace Darling rescue near Seahouses here: <http://www.seahouseslifeboat.org.uk/Pages/GraceD.htm>
- Imagine what happened before the lifeboat was launched, what the weather was like and how the people being rescued felt.
- Write three verses and a chorus that tell the story of the rescue. You can make up your own tune or sing along to another song you know.
- Make up some actions to go with the words.
- Sing your sea shanty with some friends.



Extreme weather



In January 1953 over three hundred people and 50,000 animals died in one night when the North Sea tide rose by more than 2.5 metres. More recently, new-born seal pups were killed when a high tide flooded their colony on the Farne Islands.

- If one of these rare events happens again advanced warning systems should give people time to leave the area. How would you feel if you had to leave your home because of a storm warning? What three things would you take with you?
- Some models of our future climate predict there will be fewer storms in the future, but these will probably be more intense. What impact do you think this will have? Are there places or animals on the coast that could be affected?
- The number of people using the sea for leisure is growing. What advice would you give a sailor or surfer before they went out on the sea?

Be safe by the sea

It can be dangerous to play by the sea. Always remember to:

- Check the weather (here: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/coast/tides/northeast.shtml>), tides (here: <http://easytide.ukho.gov.uk/easytide/EasyTide/SelectPort.aspx>) and Holy Island safe-crossing times (here: <http://www.northumberlandlife.org/holy-island/>) before you leave home. Make sure you have someone with you.
- Be careful on cliffs and rocks, which can be slippery when wet. If you see someone in trouble dial 999 and ask for the Coastguard. You can find out more about beach safety at the Marine and Coastal Authority's SeaSmart pages: <http://www.mcga.gov.uk/c4mca/seasmart-home.htm>



Find out more about the RNLI and coastal flood management

- The **RNLI** has saved over 137,000 lives at sea since it was set up in 1824. It has 231 lifeboat stations around the UK, operating out to 100 nautical miles from the coast. Explore the RNLI's Shorething website and you can download a Lifeboat Spotter's Guide or build your own boat: <http://www.rnli.org.uk/Shorething/Youth/>
- The **Northumberland 4Shores Project** is an exciting new way of managing coastal flood risk along the Northumberland coast. Working in partnership with landowners and farmers to remove agreed flood defences, the tide is allowed to flow over fields and create new habitats which will attract wildlife and provide natural flood protection. Find out more at the Northumberland Biodiversity Partnership website: <http://www.northumberlandbiodiversity.org.uk/4shores.asp>