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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Inverclyde Council</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>24 February 2011</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Corporate Director Regeneration &amp; Environment</b>	<b>Report No:</b>	<b>IC/03/11/AF/JH</b>
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<b>Subject</b>	<b>Greenock Coastguard Centre</b>		

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## **1.0 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the proposals by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) and, in particular, the proposal to close the Greenock Coastguard Centre.

## **2.0 SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The UK Government has announced it is to reduce the number of coastguard stations from 18 to 8. The Greenock centre has been earmarked for closure in 2012-13 with the loss of between 30 to 35 frontline operational coastguards. A consultation on modernising the Coastguard was launched on 16 December 2010 and will run for 14 weeks.
- 2.2 The Shipping Minister, Mike Penning, has commented that the current organisation of the Coastguard is not well placed to respond to new challenges which are making parts of our seas more congested. The Minister believes that the latest technologies offer opportunities to address such issues and modernise the Coastguard to deliver an improved, more integrated service at lower cost.
- 2.3 The proposals will result in one 24 hour operations centre in Scotland, based in Aberdeen with two centres based in England. Five sub-centres will be located in Humber, Swansea and Falmouth with two in either Liverpool or Belfast and Shetland or Stornoway, some of which would cover Inverclyde and the West Coast. Concerns have already been expressed about future safety should Inverclyde and the West Coast be looked after by those above.
- 2.4 The Greenock Centre covers a geographical area from Mull of Galloway in the southwest to Ardnamurchan Point in the north west, the Clyde estuary and islands including Bute. 80 employees are based in the Navy Buildings in Eldon Street, including the 30 to 35 employees under threat.
- 2.5 The Public Commercial and Services Union has expressed concern about the negative impact of job losses within Inverclyde whilst the Government propose to have one 24 hour centre in Aberdeen, an area where there is already full employment. It has also produced information obtained under the Freedom of Information Act that the Greenock centre is 'one of the UK's busiest', ranking fifth in the UK for the number of incidents handled. Aberdeen is ranked in 10<sup>th</sup> position.
- 2.6 On 11 February 2011, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency announced a series of public meetings concerning the proposed Coastguard modernisation programme. The purpose of the meetings is to provide an opportunity for local communities around the

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existing Maritime Co-ordination Centres to hear more about the proposals, ask questions of MCA representatives and have the opportunity to express their views. Each meeting will be independently chaired. A local meeting has been arranged for Wednesday 2 March 2011 in Port Glasgow Town Hall at 7.30 p.m.

- 2.7 The Greenock Centre has been in talks with Inverclyde Council and Riverside Inverclyde to find suitable alternative premises.
- 2.8 Members should be aware that it is understood the Chief Executive of the MCA is visiting Greenock on 15 March 2011. The Council's Chief Executive has asked for a meeting to discuss how Greenock Coastguard Centre operations might be retained locally and to offer assistance from the Council to do so if possible.

### **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 That Members note the contents of this report.

**Aubrey Fawcett**  
**Corporate Director – Regeneration and Environment**