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Dear David,

2011 has been designated as the European Year of the Volunteer by the European Union in recognition of the important contribution that volunteers make to many member states. A number of activities to increase awareness of the value and importance of volunteering will be undertaken throughout the year.

Across the European Union approximately 92 to 94 million adults are involved in volunteering activities within the EU. That is 23% of all Europeans over the age of 15.

Volunteerism has formed the cornerstone of maritime, mountain, cave and lowland emergency response within the UK and the service we provide is the envy of the world. The delivery of a safe, effective and local community-based mountain rescue service to those in peril on our mountains to such a high standard would not be achievable or affordable by any state without your valued support.

As we approach volunteering week I wanted to say how proud I am of the dedicated and professional service that you all provide and to thank you for the time that you have devoted to assisting members of the public across the UK often in the most difficult and challenging circumstances. I recognise the demands and challenges that volunteering places not only upon you as a volunteer but also on your families and I would particularly like to extend my thanks to your families for their continued support. Without both the dedicated support of yourselves and your families the fantastic service we provide would not be possible.

As Chair of the UK Search and Rescue (UKSAR) Operators Group I wanted to thank all the community based volunteer search and rescue groups and their individual members for the time and dedication that they have devoted to assisting members of the public across the UK. The members of the UKSAR Operators Group recognise the personal sacrifices that volunteers make to enable such services to be available.

On behalf of the UKSAR Operators Group I would like to wish you continued success in your volunteering activities and training.

kind regards,

Roderick Johnson MNI
Chief Coastguard

