One of the earliest pieces of evidence proving the existence of a boat kept on the coast at Formby for the sole purpose of saving lives at sea is an extract from the Liverpool Common Council meeting on 2 April 1777.

Although the boat was not at that time called a 'lifeboat', Formby was, nevertheless, credited as being one of the first lifeboat stations. The extract shows how Liverpool Town Council funded an organised system of rescue from shipwreck at the mouth of the River Mersey. As the second busiest port in Britain at the time, Liverpool was pioneering in the area of lifesaving at sea. For example, Dr Thomas Houlston set up the Liverpool Institution for Recovering Drowned Persons in 1775. Like the Royal Humane Society based in London (established in 1774 and then called the Society for the Recovery of Persons Apparently Drowned), this organisation aimed to retrieve and resuscitate victims of drowning with specially trained medical assistants and also provided payments to bystanders who rescued them. William Hutchinson, the Liverpool Dock Master and Water Bailiff (1759–93), was another man influencing Liverpool's humane movement. His text, *A Treatise on Practical Seamanship* (1777), promoted safe navigation and rescues to ships in distress. Such schemes and books intended to confront the British public with the inhumanity of leaving others to die at sea.

It is thought that Sir William Hillary, who campaigned to set up the National Institution for the Preservation of Life from Shipwreck (now the RNLI), would have been aware of these Liverpool schemes for lifesaving at sea.

**Source 3: Early lifeboat stations**

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