Captain George William Manby dedicated much of his life to the invention of lifesaving devices. He witnessed the wreck of the naval ship Snipe off Great Yarmouth in 1807, which claimed over 200 lives. This tragedy inspired Manby to come up with a way of reaching out to help ships in danger near to shore.

Captain Manby’s lifesaving apparatus fired a mortar that launched a rope out to distressed ships. The rope between the ship and the shore then enabled those onboard to try to get ashore. For ships foundering near the shoreline, Manby’s invention was a literal lifeline.

Between 1811 and 1821, Captain Manby tirelessly promoted his invention to gain support for the lifesaving at sea movement. The principle of Captain Manby’s invention is still used by today’s lifeboats in some sea rescues (now known as line-throwing apparatus).
HAYING been desired of me by the undersigned Captain Manby’s Plan for saving the lives of shipwrecked persons, I have herewith inclosed a number of papers containing the said Plan, to which I have added my opinion of its probability and advantage in practice.

Papers circulated by Whitehall, London, in 1815 regarding Captain Manby’s plan for saving the lives of shipwrecked persons

Courtesy: Manx National Heritage

Manuscript reference: MNH MS 02341 C
1. What different campaign techniques did Manby use to promote his lifesaving apparatus and resources? List them.

2. How did the images of Manby's invention help the campaign to save lives at sea?

3. Looking at the parliamentary documents, suggest some steps that governments can take to support a campaign?

4. Before the parliamentary motion was made to adopt Captain Manby's invention on suitable parts of the coast, Mr Wilberforce stated one reason why some people who had saved people from shipwreck later refused to go out to rescue others. What was the reason?