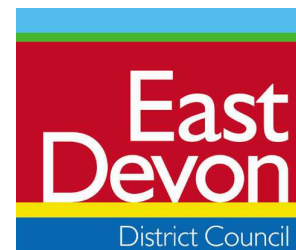




INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



News Service

30 August 2007

COUNCILS WELCOME CONTINUATION OF BEACH CLEARANCE OPERATION

Ship's owners are praised for commitment to salvage work

COUNCILS and other agencies involved in the clean-up operation along the East Devon coastline have welcomed news that the contractors carrying out much of the work will maintain a presence in the area at least until the stern section is removed.

In the meantime, there have been no further reports of oil coming ashore from the Napoli and so salvage teams have been concentrating on carting away moderate quantities of inert waste from the ship. This consists mainly of plastic and metal car parts, as well as chunks of container.

Official confirmation is still awaited from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency that a contract has been agreed for removal of the stern section. However, it seems likely that the remaining part of the hull will be floated onto a barge and transported to an as yet unnamed salvage port, towards the end of the year.

Councillor Graham Liverton, EDDC's Portfolio Holder Environment, said: "We believe that the remaining part of the ship is likely to be carted away by the end of November. We understand that the DRS contractors will maintain a presence in the area until that time.

"We welcome this news, as it means that the same teams of experts we have been working with over the past several months will continue to deal with any wreckage or other material washed up from the Napoli.

"We are extremely appreciative of the good offices of the ship's owners and their insurers in agreeing to continue supporting the salvage operation, which is very public spirited of them".

His words were echoed by Andrew Borman, Devon County Council's Emergency Planning Officer, who said: "I am sure all of us who are involved in dealing with this operation and who care about the environment are grateful that it's possible for the DRS salvage teams to be nearby – at least no further away than Portland – ready to fan out along the coastline in response to reports of either oil or cargo from the Napoli.

"They have been finding quantities of car parts about 30 metres below the low water line and these have been collected by divers for loading aboard the Terramare ready for bringing ashore".

Over the Bank Holiday weekend, some 10 tonnes of inert waste from the ship were washed up at Beer, Seaton and Branscombe. These were collected by DRS staff and taken to the compound at Branscombe.

A further quantity – around 12 tonnes – of car parts and other items from the Napoli that were retrieved by divers below the water-line have been taken aboard the salvage ship Terramare.

Good weather over the Bank Holiday weekend brought large crowds of visitors, especially to Branscombe, where tourists kept salvage staff busy answering questions about the ship and the salvage operation.

As the fine weather continued this week and with the school holidays not yet over, information boards at resorts along the East Devon coastline are continuing to be updated on a daily basis, so that the public are aware of the status of each beach and what precautions, if any, need to be taken.

Any sightings of oil should be reported via telephone to East Devon District Council on **01395 571 700**. The Council will immediately pass the details on to the contractors.

The public are asked to exercise care when reporting oil sightings and to do so promptly. Well-intentioned but outdated and inaccurate information has led to delays in identifying and responding to spills on local beaches.

If anyone is affected by oil on their skin or hair, or if a pet is affected, the oil is best removed by the use of baby or cooking oil, followed by washing with normal soap.

Ends

NOTES FOR EDITORS

The bow section of the Napoli has been removed to Belfast for recycling and the stern section will now be made safe and removed for recycling. It is likely that small amounts of oil will continue to come ashore or be released from shingle banks above and below the tide line over the coming months. Whilst every reasonable effort is made to contain oil and to prevent further leakage, this cannot be guaranteed.

The Napoli carried light, medium and heavy fuel oils, a total amount of about 4,000 tons (4,000 cubic meters), and some 2,300 containers.

To date, all but 9 containers have been located and dealt with. The 9 missing containers do not contain any hazardous materials or cargo.

Operations to remove oil from the vessel were conducted and some 3,800 tons of oil was successfully pumped out and secured. The total spillage was about 200 tons (200 cubic meters). To put this in context, the Sea Empress in Milford Haven in 1996 spilled 72,000 tons (72,000 cubic meters) of oil. In Milford Haven, the environment was fully recovered within 18 months.

The responses to all pollution and the recovery of containers, container parts and their contents, oil spills off-shore and on-shore following protocols established between all interested parties. These protocols incorporate the use of booms, absorbents, heavy plant, manual labour and dispersants wherever beneficial.

The ship's owners undertook to manage and pay for the on and off-shore recovery and clear up operations. This has included, from the time of the vessel's arrival, onshore contractors, salvors and off-shore contractors, divers, aerial, surface and shore surveillance, of the Napoli and Lyme Bay.

Divers continue to identify and clear container parts and cargo from the sea bed, from the deeper waters in the bay to the tide line.

People on the beach may observe rigid inflatable boats (RIBS), service boats and landing craft operating along the coastline. These vessels are working and so boating enthusiasts are advised to keep well clear. The onshore contractor is using heavy plant, manual labour, an ATV, 4WD vehicles and an inflatable in their efforts to monitor and to react to any oil threatening the local beaches.

On and off-shore oil spills are attended to under internationally agreed protocols. These protocols exclude the use of chemical dispersants on-shore and focus on environmentally accepted methods including the use of inert absorbents and physical waste and oil removal. They also recognise the role and capacity of the natural environment to disperse oil pollution. Use of chemical dispersants is strictly controlled and their use onshore is prohibited.

Officers from East Devon District Council and Devon County Council have been involved since Day 1 of the Napoli incident. They have worked at various stages of the operation with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), the Police, Environment Agency, National Trust and many other agencies to deal with the many and varied challenges that the ship has presented.

For information, please contact:

Nick Stephen, Communications Officer on 01395 517559

East Devon District Council, Knowle, Sidmouth, Devon EX10 8HL

www.eastdevon.gov.uk