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News Service

9 July 2007

DIVERS CAN NOW INSPECT HULL OF CRIPPLED CARGO SHIP

Hey ho, up she rises – as Napoli is re-floated

NEARLY six months after she was grounded off Branscombe in January, the cargo ship MSC Napoli was re-floated on Monday in an operation watched by holidaymakers and a gaggle of local and national media representatives.

In bright July sunshine, the operation got under way early in the morning, and was recorded by TV cameras, radio journalists and press reporters.

Sea water flooding the stern of the ship was pumped out and, once afloat, the Napoli was towed some 500 metres from her resting place into deeper water.

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) took advantage of a short period of good weather and favourable sea conditions to undertake the operation so that divers could inspect the hull of the ship.

What happens to the crippled ship next will depend on the findings of the expert team of divers as to the condition of the hull. The ship will now be anchored in Branscombe Bay awaiting a decision on her future by the Secretary of State's Representative in Maritime Salvage and Intervention, Robin Middleton.

Commenting on progress with Operation Napoli so far, a spokesman for East Devon District Council said: "We have been lucky in that the wind and tides have been kind to us, but that does not detract in any way from the superb job the Maritime and Coastguard Agency have done, but in particular the unseen heroes of this whole operation – the salvage teams. The result was that people's worst fears were never realised. There has been some regrettable loss of seabirds, but the coastline has escaped relatively unscathed.

"The Napoli brought out the good and bad in human nature. The scavenging on Branscombe beach in the early aftermath of the grounding was sickening. But we were heartened by the hundreds of people who volunteered to litter pick the beaches in April.

“The impact on tourism is hard to define at this stage, with the summer holidays still to come. The initial novelty value of the ship off our coast brought a large influx of day visitors to some resorts, but a few businesses have reported a drop in bookings caused by uncertainty about the long-term prospects for the beaches. We have worked with various tourism organisations to minimise the impact on visitor numbers.

“The arrival of the Napoli on our shores has certainly put this beautiful stretch of coastline on the map and we now start to look forward to the day when we can wave goodbye to the ship and life returns to normal”.

For more information, please visit the MCA website at:

<http://www.mcga.gov.uk/c4mca/mcga-newsroom/mcga-press-releases.htm?id=8D0B8138CF1F5F65&m=7&y=2007>

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