

MSC Napoli Update 16 September 2008

For information. The Maritime and Coastguard Agency has released the following information to media today.

Press Notice No: 304 16 September 2008

MSC NAPOLI SALVAGE WORK SUSPENDED DURING WINTER

With the onset of autumnal storms, and following discussions with the Environment Group and Salvors, the Secretary of State's Representative, Hugh Shaw, has decided to suspend salvage operations for the remaining stern section of the 'MSC Napoli' until spring 2009.

The decision to suspend salvage operations has been agreed by the insurers and the Environment Group.

Hugh Shaw said:

"The decision to suspend salvage operations for the 'MSC Napoli' was necessary to lessen the risks that the onset of harsher autumnal weather would have presented to the safety of the salvors involved, and the local environment. The conditions under which salvors are operating are now becoming increasingly treacherous. During the initial incident no lives were lost, and my aim is to lessen the risks to anyone involved in the operation during this final phase.

"To date, 2,800 tonnes of the aft section have been successfully removed, however the remaining section is heavily constructed and proving difficult to dismantle. The engine itself weighs approximately 1,400 tonnes and partially remains in situ. The vessel's location and exposure to the elements has not helped salvage activities. There is also an estimated 3,000 tonnes of silt and clay trapped inside the ship and adding substantial weight to the overall structure.

“I will also be looking at all options during the winter and the logistics in mobilising specialist equipment given the nature of the remaining structure and the challenges that the engine removal presents. However due to the very nature of the salvage such highly specialised equipment is unlikely to be available before the spring.

“My goal continues to be the removal of as much of the remaining aft section, as is practicably possible, balanced against the environmental sensitivities of the Lyme Bay area. “

A Temporary Exclusion Zone (TEZ) of 500 metres remains in place. In addition and prior to the suspension of salvage operations, navigational marks will be deployed around the wreck. Additional counter pollution response measures including personnel and equipment remains in place. MCA aerial surveillance flights will continue to patrol the area on a regular basis.

There are no restrictions on any nearby beaches whilst contractors continue to monitor and remove any items that wash ashore. The overall recovery rate is also diminishing rapidly.