



**KOMMUNENES INTERNASJONALE MILJØORGANISASJON
LOCAL AUTHORITIES INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL
ORGANISATION**

PRESS RELEASE

KIMO UK Condemns MCA Decision to Allow Ship to Ship Oil Transfers in Forth

KIMO UK today condemned the decision by the Maritime Coastguard Agency to allow the transfer large volumes of Russian crude between huge oil tankers offshore in the Firth of Forth.

KIMO UK¹ had opposed the proposals in a written response to the UK Maritime Coastguard Agency (MCA) consultation and had written to Deputy Scottish Environment Minister Rhona Brankin asking her to use her powers to stop the practise in this highly environmentally sensitive area.

In a statement issued today KIMO UK Chair Councillor Angus Nicolson condemned the decision saying, “ *The Agency has ignored almost every response put forward as part this consultation. This is an incredible decision that totally disregards a consensus from experts, statutory agencies such as Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) wildlife organisations such as RSPB and local authorities emergency planners that have highlighted the inadequacy of the plan to deal with a major oil pollution incident in the Forth as a result of these activities.*

If they are going to disregard this substantial body of advise against this proposal what is the point of consulting. This just confirms our suspicions that this was already a done deal. It is time for the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Environment Minister to intervene and protect our marine environment in Scotland and refuse to licence this activity which we believe it has the power to do under Conservation Regulations.”

KIMO UK believes that due to the increasing volumes of crude oil and other hydrocarbons being exported through the Baltic and Barents Sea’s ship-to-ship transfers of heavy oil will become increasingly common around the North Sea. Such operations represent a significant pollution threat to UK and North Sea coastal waters. It is therefore paramount that all applications to carry out ship-to-ship transfers include an Environmental Impact Assessment, have a contingency plan which covers the worst-case scenario spill, require the

¹ KIMO UK is a constituent network of KIMO International, an organisation that consists of 112 coastal local authorities in 9 countries in Northern Europe representing over 6 million inhabitants.

provision of tugs and emergency response vessels on station with the capacity to deal with a worst case scenario for the duration of the transfer and that the local authority(s) are included in the decision making process at the earliest opportunity.

KIMO UK has serious reservations regarding the measures, which are being proposed to protect the marine environment from the impacts from the proposed ship-to-ship transfers within the designated harbour area in the Firth of Forth. Significant deficiencies have been highlighted by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Fife Council, RSPB and other organisations and individuals about the contingency planning, including technical and safety issues, risk assessments and how the environmental impacts have been assessed. Unlike most oil transfers, from shore to ship along side a jetty, this proposal will involve very large oil tankers side by side in exposed waters. This is the same type of heavy crude that occurred on shorelines in France and Spain after the Erika and Prestige disasters several years ago. KIMO believes that the risk to this highly sensitive area is too significant to allow this proposal to proceed no matter how robust the prevention measures.

Background

KIMO UK is a constituent network of KIMO International, an organisation that consists of 112 coastal local authorities in 9 countries in Northern Europe representing over 6 million inhabitants. The organisation holds observer status in the North Sea Ministerial Conference process where is a member of the Special Interest Group on Sustainable Shipping (IGSS). It is also observers at OSPAR and at IMO (as part of the WWF delegation). For more details see www.kimointernational.org

Melbourne Marine Services (MMS), based in Sunderland, wants to make more than 100 transfers a year in the Firth of Forth, involving up to eight million tonnes of oil. The plan is to establish an anchorage where small tankers from terminals in the Baltic and Barents seas can pump oil to giant tankers to deliver to the US and Far East.

Stakeholders have been consulted by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), on behalf of the Minister for Transport, concerning a proposal by Melbourne Marine Services to conduct Ship-to-Ship (STS) transfer of crude oil and other hydrocarbons in the Firth of Forth.

KIMO UK submitted its comments on the revised and amplified oil spill contingency plans submitted to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) by Forth Ports plc and Briggs Environmental Services Ltd (BESL) on behalf of Melbourne Marine Services and on supporting information from Forth Ports and Scottish Natural Heritage. For more details see www.kimointernational.org

Although the industry is asserted to operate as best practice to regulations drafted in 1999, no national regulatory regime for ship-to-ship transfers has

been established (DfT are expected to consult on new regulations in the near future).

Regular ship-to-ship transfers occur at Scapa Flow in Orkney and some ship-to-ship transfers along side a jetty have occurred at the Sullom Voe Oil Terminal in Shetland.

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