

news release

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Environment Agency demands strict green standards in recycling French naval ship

The Environment Agency have put in place the some of the world's most rigorous regulatory controls to ensure that the former French naval vessel – the Q790 (formerly Le Clemenceau) - is dismantled and recycled in a safe and environmentally sound manner.

The Q790 set off from Brest in France on Tuesday and is due to arrive at Able UK Limited's recycling facility at Graythorp in Hartlepool over the weekend.

Able UK Limited's facilities have been meticulously assessed before permits with stringent conditions were issued last year, allowing the dismantling of waste ships and offshore structures in a dry-dock in a manner that will not cause harm to the environment or to human health.

These environmental permits include:

- Environmental Permit (Waste Management Licence) to allow ships to be dismantled and recycled at Graythorp (determined June 2008),
- Five Consents to Discharge – two for permission to discharge site drainage, two for treated sewage and one for trade effluent (determined March 2008),
- Work in Rivers consent, which allows Able UK to do work in the river (determined February 2008).
- A non-native species assessment of the vessel to ensure there is no marine growth that can be introduced and cause harm in the Tees estuary (January 2009).

The Environmental Permit was issued following a public consultation and after Planning Permission was secured from Hartlepool Borough Council in 2007.

Environment Agency North East Environment Manager, Bob Pailor said: "In 2006, the Clemenceau was destined to be dismantled in India in appalling conditions for workers and the environment.

"The Clemenceau is now to be dismantled at the Able UK facility which has some of the world's most rigorous regulatory controls to ensure this vessel is dismantled and recycled in an environmentally sound manner. For instance, we are not aware of another country that requires a non-native species assessment before a waste ship movement takes place.

"The Environment Agency will police site operations to ensure the company comply with permit conditions to protect people and the environment. We have a range of Enforcement and Prosecution powers at our disposal if we detect operations are not being carried out in accordance with the permit conditions."

Environmental regulations

An Environment Permit authorises the keeping, treatment, or disposal of controlled waste. Such licences contain conditions that the operator must comply with to ensure that waste management operations do not pollute the environment, cause harm to human health or serious detriment to local amenities.

Hartlepool Borough Council granted planning permission to Able UK in 2007 and the rigorous technical assessment of their Environmental Permit application utilised significant public consultation, seeking views from local people on the level of protection the licence affords.

Mr Pailor said: "Some conditions were altered as result of the public consultation. For example, one respondent suggested that inspection of the dry-dock floor should be independent of Able UK. We agreed with this suggestion and an 'appropriately qualified third party' must now carry out the inspection."

Around 94% of the ship of the 27,000-tonne vessel will be recycled and any residual hazardous material, such as asbestos, must be handled and disposed of in accordance with the strict conditions of the Environmental Permit.

The Environment Agency will work closely with other regulatory authorities – Health and Safety Executive, Hartlepool Borough Council, PD Ports and the Marine Fisheries Agency – to ensure compliance with permit and planning conditions ensuring that people and the environment are not harmed by Able UK's operations. The regulators will share information to ensure standards are being met.

Waste ship movements

Under European Waste Shipment Regulations (WSR), the French Naval Support Service – *Service de Soutien de la Flotte* (SSF) – needed to secure consent for the movement of the ship from both the Environment Agency and the counterpart French regulator *DRIRE Bretagne*, before moving the ship from Brest in France.

Following confirmation that all permits and licences were in place, the Environment Agency consented on 26 November 2008 to allow SSF to move the Q790 from Brest in France to Able UK Limited's facilities at Graythorp, Hartlepool for dismantling and recovery.

Under European Waste Shipment Regulations, recovery of ships must take place within 12 months of the vessels arrival at the recovery facility.

Worldwide ship recycling standards

Meanwhile, the United Kingdom's influence has been at the forefront of developing worldwide standards for ship recycling.

The Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) expects a ship recycling convention to be adopted at a conference in Hong Kong in May.

The new convention will provide regulations for the design, construction, operation and preparation of ships to facilitate safe and environmentally sound recycling, and the establishment of an appropriate enforcement mechanism for ship recycling, incorporating certification and reporting requirements.

IMO has co-operated with the International Labour Organization and the relevant bodies of the Basel Convention on ship recycling in developing the new draft convention.

For more information visit www.environment-agency.gov.uk.

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