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OSPAR Commission

for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic

Commission OSPAR

pour la protection du milieu marin de l'Atlantique du Nord-Est

18 November 2004

Robert Latimer, Esq,
Shell Hill,
Bents Rd,
Whitburn,
Tyne & Wear SR6 7NT

Dear Mr Latimer,

DUMPING OF DREDGED MATERIAL

Thank you for your e-mail about the proposed dumping of dredged sediment by the Port of Tyne. I am replying by post since your e-mail did not give your full e-mail address.

2. You said "The Port of Tyne intend to tip 60,000 tons of contaminated sediment into the North Sea as a trial, capping with silt and sand from the harbour entrance. The intention is to dredge the old quays and docks of the old shipyards. The sediment contains tributyl-tin, heavy metals etc., being a lethal contaminate of toxins. This is a recipe for a disaster [and is] ill thought out. I am an engineer and in my view if this goes ahead it will effect the food chain of all countries that border the North sea. Can you help to insist that a full inquiry is held before this goes ahead. The Port of Tyne refuse me access to the EIA"

3. The OSPAR Commission is the means through which the Governments of North-West Europe co-operate to protect the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic. It works by agreeing rules and standards for the regulation of activities likely to affect the marine environment. It does not have any executive responsibility for specific decisions which should apply those rules and standards.

4. In the field that concerns you, the OSPAR Commission has adopted "OSPAR Guidelines for the Management of Dredged Material". These were revised at the Commission's meeting in June this year. You can find the text of the Guidelines on the OSPAR website (www.ospar.org), in the section on the Biodiversity and Ecosystems Strategy, under the heading "Decisions, Recommendations and Other Agreements". They are Agreement 2004-08.

5. The application of these guidelines to individual cases is a matter for the United Kingdom Government. A licence from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is needed for such dumping. I am therefore sending a copy of this letter to the Mr John Roberts, the Head of the Marine and Navigation Division in DEFRA so that he can arrange for your to receive an explanation of what they are doing.

6. As far as concerns the Environmental Impact Assessment, the United Kingdom Government has an obligation under Article 9 of the OSPAR Convention to ensure that their relevant authorities make available to the public any available information in written, visual, aural or data-base form on activities or measures likely to affect the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic. This obligation is subject to certain exceptions, such as where the information affects commercial and industrial confidentiality. Again, there is an obligation on the United Kingdom authorities to explain why any information is not being made available.

Yours sincerely,

Alan Simcock

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Executive Secretary, OSPAR Commission

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