



## **LOCAL AUTHORITIES INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANISATION**

### **PRESS RELEASE**

**25<sup>th</sup> October 2010**

### **DECISION TO CUT EMERGENCY TUG COVER LEAVES UK COAST AT RISK**



The recent decision to cut the four Coastguard Emergency Towing Vessels (ETV's) at a time when shipping levels around the UK and oil exploration in the Atlantic are both increasing is short sighted in the extreme. The tugs, recommended in the Lord Donaldson inquiry into the Braer oil spill in 1993, provide a vital emergency response capacity, which cannot be provided by the commercial salvage sector.

The projected savings of £32 million over 4 and a half years would pail into insignificance if there were to be a major accident within that time. The assertion by the Government that there is sufficient capacity in the commercial salvage is completely contrary to the experience of the Braer oil spill and would leave the Northern and Western Isles particularly vulnerable in the case of an accident due to the lack alternative capacity.

The value of the ETV's was highlighted just last week when the £1.2 billion nuclear powered submarine HMS Astute ran aground on a shingle bank off Skye and was attended by the Anglian Prince when she could not be refloated. The combination of rough seas, hazardous cargoes and increasing traffic mean that these vessels are not a luxury item but an absolute necessity that must be preserved.

Not only will the decision put the environment at risk it will also place seafarers lives at risk particularly when the non renewal of the Nimrod aircraft fleet is also taken into consideration. This combination will significantly reduce the Coastguards ability to respond to major incidents.

KIMO UK Chair Cllr Norman MacDonald stated *“This decision is extremely short sighted and leaves huge areas of the UK coastline at risk from pollution from shipping accidents. These vessels were brought in because there was not adequate cover so how the Government can now claim there is now suddenly adequate private salvage cover is completely incredulous. These vessels are not a luxury but an essential service to protect vulnerable areas of the UK Coastline and the lives of seafarers”*

KIMO Secretariat John Mouat added *“This crazy decision must be reversed and we will be demanding a meeting with the Minister to put our views across. We understand that financially times are tough however cutting these tugs leaves coastal communities at risk of huge costs in the case of a serious accident, which could far outstrip the cost of the Rescue Tug Service.”*

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Notes to editors

1) KIMO (Local Authorities International Environmental Organisation) is an association of coastal local authorities whose goal is to eliminate pollution from the Northern Seas. The organisation's members include 120 local authorities representing over 6 million inhabitants in Norway, Denmark, Sweden, the Faeroe Islands, the Netherlands, Belgium, United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, the Isle of Man and has established a KIMO Baltic Forum involving 5 countries. KIMO UK is the United Kingdom network of the organisation and has a Secretariat based in the Shetland Isles.

2) KIMO Resolution 04/1994 (Amended 1996) Pollution from Shipping, referring to the Lord Donaldson inquiry findings, can be found at:  
<http://www.kimointernational.org/Portals/0/Files/RESL494.pdf>