



HM Government

The United Kingdom National Contingency Plan for Responding to Marine Pollution Incidents

International Assistance and Co-operation

June 2024





Introduction

The UK is party to several international agreements which provide for co-operation in dealing with major marine pollution incidents. This appendix provides a summary of them.

OPRC Convention

The OPRC Convention places obligations on States Parties concerning their preparedness for, and response to, oil pollution incidents. It also provides a framework for international cooperation for combating major oil pollution incidents.

The OPRC–HNS Protocol has been developed to expand the scope of OPRC 1990, to apply, in whole or in part, to pollution incidents by hazardous substances other than oil. Together with the OPRC Convention, the OPRC-HNS Protocol will provide a framework for international cooperation in establishing systems for preparedness and response at the national, regional and global levels. This Protocol is not yet in force in the UK.

The Bonn Agreement

The Contracting Parties to the Bonn Agreement for Co-operation in dealing with Pollution of the North Sea by Oil and Other Harmful Substances 1983 are the States bordering the North Sea, English Channel and the wider approaches to these regions. The Contracting Parties are: the Kingdom of Belgium, the Kingdom of Denmark, the French Republic, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Republic of Ireland, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Kingdom of Norway, The Kingdom of Spain, the Kingdom of Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the European Union.

The Parties notify each other of any marine pollution or threat of marine pollution likely to pose a threat to the coast or related interests of another Party. They pledge to assist one another to the best of their ability, on request, and on a cost recovery basis.

Anglo-French Joint Maritime Contingency Plan (Mancheplan)

Under the Bonn Agreement, the English Channel is a zone of joint responsibility between France and the UK. The Mancheplan covers counter pollution and search and rescue operations. It sets out the division of responsibility between the two parties. For incidents likely to affect both parties simultaneously, it outlines command and control procedures, channels of communication, and the resources available to each party.

Mancheplan designates the territorial waters of the Channel Islands as a special zone of responsibility. It contains procedures for the provision of assistance, as required, to the Channel Island Authorities.

The Norway-United Kingdom Joint Contingency Plan (Norbrit Agreement)

Norway and the UK have developed the Norbrit Agreement for joint counter pollution operations in the zone extending 50 miles either side of the median line separating the UK and Norwegian continental shelf.

Like Mancheplan, the Norbrit Agreement sets out command and control procedures for pollution incidents likely to affect both parties, channels of communication and resources available. However, it does not cover search and rescue activities.

The UK/Ireland Agreement



A 'Memorandum of Understanding for the Conduct of Operations between HM Coastguard (HMCG) and the Irish Coast Guard (IRCG) for Search and Rescue and Maritime Intervention and Salvage and Counter Pollution Preparedness and Response' has existed since October 2019.

The MOU is designed to ensure the effectiveness of response to search and rescue, maritime salvage and intervention and pollution incidents in the Irish Sea and adjoining waters or as appropriate, within each State's zones of responsibility for search and rescue and counter pollution, that may affect both United Kingdom (UK) and Irish interests. It is not the intended to create legally binding obligations.

The Operational MOU sets out the non-binding operational, technical and administrative procedures for co-operation in dealing with search and rescue, maritime salvage and intervention and counter pollution incidents. Nothing in this MOU has any jurisdictional effect, whether on issues of sovereignty or law.

The Anglo/Isle of Man Operating Agreement

The UK/Isle of Man covers counter pollution and search and rescue operations and was agreed in May 2002.

Faroe Islands

A Local Agreement of Mutual Support exists between the UK and the Faroe Islands and remains extant and was agreed in 2007. A review of this document is to be pursued following settlement of the Agreement on Co-operation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic.

Overseas Territories

The UK Overseas Territories retain their connection with the UK through the Red Ensign Group (REG). This is the collective name for the UK Member State, comprising the UK, the Crown Dependencies and OTs. Elected governments in the Territories have a wide range of responsibilities for the conduct of their own affairs, one of these is pollution prevention, preparedness and response (PPR)

International maritime obligations have been devolved to each individual Government but in terms of compliance, REG is assessed as a collective. As such, each territory has an equal and shared responsibility to meet their obligations and there is a reliance on each other to perform well.

The UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) undertakes superintendence of the REG on behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport under sections 292 and 315 of the UK Merchant Shipping Act 1995.



Overseas Territories consist of the following:

- Anguilla
- Montserrat
- Bermuda
- Pitcairn
- British Antarctic Territory
- St Helena, Ascension Island Tristan
- British Indian Ocean Territory da Cunha
- British Virgin Islands
- South Georgia & South Sandwich Islands
- Cayman Islands
- Falkland Islands
- Turks and Caicos Islands
- Gibraltar
- Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia in Cyprus

At the request of an Overseas Territory, the MCA's Counter Pollution and Salvage team may be called upon to assist, advise or otherwise support on contingency planning and counter pollution activities.