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**THE ROLE OF “THE ENVIRONMENT GROUP” IN MARITIME  
POLLUTION RESPONSE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM**

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**ABSTRACT**

The response to any maritime incident in the UK requiring a regional or national response involves the establishment of an Environment Group. All those involved in operations at sea (including salvage) and shoreline clean up need environmental advice. The Environment Group advises on environmental aspects and impacts of these operations. The Group is a common facility, providing comprehensive advice to all response units.

As well as provision of "expert advice" based on immediately available data and information, there may be a need to initiate the collection of real time environmental data. Its purpose is initially to provide accurate baseline data of vulnerable environmental features immediately before impact of the pollution plume, so that the damage can be quantified. The Group also needs to track the success of preventive and counter pollution measures throughout the incident, and to assess the overall long-term environmental impact.

It is the responsibility of the MCA Chief Scientist, or his representative, to initiate the process for the formation of the Environment Group. The core membership of the Group comes from the relevant statutory nature conservation agency, fisheries department, environmental regulator, and (in the case of incidents beyond territorial waters) the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC). The Group also includes a representative from MCA. These core members nominate a chairman for the Group as quickly as possible. In general, the chairman comes from the relevant statutory nature conservation agency. However, with the agreement of the members, the chairmanship of the Group may change to reflect any alteration in the nature of the incident.

In the simplest incidents, the chairman acts as a conduit of advice (probably by telephone) to SOSREP or the response units. The chairman is also free to offer any environmental advice that he may think appropriate. The chairman also decides when it is necessary to convene the Environment Group at the scene of the incident and

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nominates Environment Liaison Officers for any response units established. Local contingency plans need to identify suitable accommodation and support facilities for the Environment Group.

As the incident develops, the chairman and core members decide whether to expand the Group's membership to include representatives of other relevant bodies, such as local health authorities, animal welfare groups, or other non-governmental organisations.

Response units should make all reasonable efforts to consult the Environment Group, or its chairman, about any proposed action that is likely to have lasting impact on the environment. If time does not permit the response unit to consult before acting, it must circulate a full written report to the Environment Group and all other response units as soon as possible after the event. This report must detail the actions taken, the reasons for them, and their anticipated outcome.

The Environment Group should record its advice in writing and circulate it to the response units as soon as practicable. Where a response unit does not follow such advice, it should record the reasons for not doing so as soon as practicable.

If a marine pollution incident is expected to have a significant impact on the marine environment, or the shoreline, arrangements will be made to monitor and assess the impact in the longer term.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The concept of an ENVIRONMENT GROUP (EG), providing public health and environmental advice to all response units<sup>1</sup> with a role in responding to a significant maritime pollution incident was recommended by Lord Donaldson in his 'Review of Salvage and Intervention and their Command and Control' (The Stationary Office, Cm 4193, March 1999). This recommendation was accepted by Government and incorporated in the National Contingency Plan for Marine Pollution from Shipping and Offshore Installations (NCP) January 2000 (Section 9 & Appendix L). This STOp note supplements that guidance.

This notice aims to provide specific guidance to EG membership on the purpose and scope of the EG, and in particular the great value in contingency planning through the establishment and maintenance of regional "standing" EG's.

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) will initiate the formation of an EG to provide advice during any incident requiring a regional or national response. However, the framework established by standing EG's will also enable coordinated and timely environmental input to any other more localised or specialised incidents.

It is stressed that the EG's remit is advisory and it has no powers of direction or enforcement. Regulatory functions of individual members of the EG are exercised outwith the Group structure and function.

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<sup>1</sup> The Salvage Control Unit, Marine Response Centre, Shoreline Response Centre and port or harbour Command and Control Centre are referred to as *response units* throughout this document.

Standing EG's are currently being set up across the UK. The MCA aim to cover the entire UK coastline with standing EG's and individual group notification protocols by the end of 2001. New groups will be added to an annotated map as they are established.

## **2.0 PURPOSE, SCOPE AND KEY TASKS OF THE ENVIRONMENT GROUP**

### 2.1 Purpose of the Environment Group

The purpose of the EG is derived from the Terms of Reference detailed in NCP Appendix L, paragraphs L.3 - 5.

- ◆ To provide public health and environmental advice and guidance to all response units involved in response to an oil and or chemical marine pollution incident and subsequent clean up operations.
- ◆ To advise response units so as to minimise the impact of the incident on the environment in the widest sense, taking account of risks to public health and the natural environmental, and potential impacts arising from any response operations, whether salvage or clean up operations, at sea and on the shoreline.
- ◆ To monitor, assess and document the public health and environmental (including wildlife) impact of a maritime pollution incident with respect to oil and/or chemicals and the impact of all measures implemented in response to the incident.
- ◆ To facilitate welfare, rehabilitation or humane disposal of wildlife casualties by recognised animal welfare organisations.

### 2.2 Scope of the Environment Group

The scope of EG functions will be directly proportional to the scale and nature of the incident, its geographical location, extent, severity, pollutant involved, potential hazard to human health and the environmental sensitivities. The scale of incident and response and their constituent phases are likely to evolve over time and the functions of the EG will need to be graduated to meet changing requirements, escalating or diminishing in the input to each phase over time.

The definition of marine and coastal environment in the EG's context includes public health, the natural environment, water quality, wildlife including fish, cultural, landscape, habitats and socio - economic factors linked to human health, e.g. through food chains.

**The scope of EG functions includes:**

- ◆ provision of public health and environmental advice to the Secretary of State's Representative (SOSREP), the Salvage Control Unit (SCU), the Marine Response Centre (MRC), the Shoreline Response Centre (SRC) and the Command and Control Centre for incident response in ports and harbours.
- ◆ liaison with and obtaining any relevant information the EG requires to fulfill its functions from all response units established to deal with the pollution.
- ◆ proactive management of information on all health and environmental issues between the units.
- ◆ seeking to minimise the impact of an oil and or chemical pollution incident on human health (See Annex 1 Risk Assessment)
- ◆ seeking to minimise the impact of an oil and or chemical pollution incident on the environment, by determining optimal environmental end points, beyond which the response will not provide environmental benefit, or may actually produce a disbenefit. This process is undertaken through 'Net Environmental Benefit Analysis'. The scope of this task includes identification of how 'clean' the environment needs to be to enable ecological recovery.
- ◆ the prompt planning, implementation and management of data gathering to enable an integrated evaluation of acute and chronic health and environmental impacts of the pollution incident across the widest appropriate range of issues (see Annex 2 Impact Assessment).
- ◆ ensuring that proper consideration is given to all the health and safety requirements for personnel working for the EG.

2.3 Key tasks of the Environment Group

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NB: The following tasks are not in order of priority or exhaustive, and not all may be necessary in individual incidents. Tasks and priorities will be incident specific.

#### **Provision of health advice**

- ◆ Provide advice on potential and real impact on public health with respect to oil and chemicals.
- ◆ Advise on requirements for the monitoring of threat to public health.

#### **Provision of operational advice**

- ◆ Assess environmental priorities at risk from pollutant and from clean-up activity.
- ◆ Establish EG priorities for resource protection and pollution clean-up.
- ◆ Prepare an incident-specific EG view on at-sea and on-shore dispersant and chemical treatment product use.
- ◆ Provide advice and guidance on health and environmental sensitivities, and risks, preferred options and health and environmental implications of proposed salvage and clean-up response strategies with respect to achieving a net environmental benefit.
- ◆ Ensure that the above advice is timely and accurately reflects the dynamics of health and environmental resources at risk.
- ◆ Ensure thorough and timely documentation of all advice provided to the response units. Where a response unit does not follow such advice, the reasons for not doing so should be recorded. Copies of all records of advice provided and feedback from response units should be circulated within the EG (see Annex 6 – Record Keeping).
- ◆ Facilitate effective communication on health and environmental matters between the response units and the EG via appointed Environmental Liaison Officers.
- ◆ Ensure that appropriate coordinated and timely arrangements for incident specific assessment of the effects on public health and environment are initiated and subsequently managed (see Annex 3 Impact Assessment)
- ◆ Monitor and keep under review public health and environmental implications of ongoing salvage and at-sea clean up operations.

#### **Contribution to the SRC**

- ◆ Ensure representation in the SRC Management Team via the appointed Environmental Liaison Officer.

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- ◆ Monitor on-shore clean up operations, particularly in sensitive areas to ensure that clean-up operations match the strategy agreed in the SRC.
- ◆ Advise, contribute to and provide members for the SRC-controlled multi-disciplinary Shoreline Clean-Up Assessment Teams [SCAT], as required

### **Health and safety**

- ◆ Ensure the full implementation of health and safety measures for personnel working in the field on behalf of the EG [for example, through risk assessments, COSHH, Personal Protective Equipment, and health tracking].

### 2.4 Requirements of EG in order to fulfil functions

- ◆ A wide range of expertise in the impact of oil and chemicals on public health, marine and coastal ecology, wildlife, water quality, fisheries and animal welfare.
- ◆ Sufficient experienced personnel with appropriate local knowledge to carry out the many and varied key and essential tasks. A major incident will require a significant number of personnel, potentially 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The number of people and level of expertise required must not be underestimated (see section 3).
- ◆ Comprehensive information and data: pre-incident health and environmental baseline data and all incident related data. (See Annex 4 Data)
- ◆ A prepared organisational framework.

## **3.0 EG COMPOSITION AND STRUCTURE**

### 3.1 Membership of the EG

The potential membership of an EG is identified in the NCP Appendix L paragraphs L.17 - 21. The composition of the EG will depend on the scale, nature and location of the incident.

### 3.1.1 Core membership

The minimum core membership will include representatives of:

- ◆ Public health body;
- ◆ The environmental regulator [EA, EAW, SEPA or EHS];
- ◆ The statutory nature conservation body [EN, SNH, CCW or EHS, plus JNCC];
- ◆ The fisheries department [SEERAD, DEFRA, NAWAD or DARD];
- ◆ MCA.

**Table 1. The responsible organisations providing the core members under the UK devolved administrations**

Organisation → Devolved Administration↓	Environmental Regulator	Statutory Nature Conservation Body	Fisheries Department	Public health body
Scotland	SEPA	SNH (+ JNCC >12 miles offshore)	SEERAD	Health Boards
England	EA	EN (+ JNCC >12 miles offshore)	DEFRA	Health Authorities
Wales	EAW	CCW (+ JNCC >12 miles offshore)	NAWAD (DEFRA act as agent)	Health Authorities
Northern Ireland	EHS	EHS (+ JNCC >12 miles offshore)	DARD	Health Authorities

In addition, the EG may draw on specialist expertise according to the nature of the incident and which will dictate specific requirements for information and advice. In a major incident the EG will likely be expected to field significant numbers of personnel both in the core EG and in the field. Incident response circumstances may require the setting up of sub groups to cater for specialist activities. Where a clear threat to public health exists it is likely that the appropriate public health medicine organisation will join the group.

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### **3.1.2 Extended membership may include**

#### **Health:**

- ◆ NHS Regional Office Doctor or NHS Regional Office Physician.
- ◆ Chemical Incident Response Service, Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital
- ◆ Local authority Environmental Health departments
- ◆ Occupational Health Advisor
- ◆ National Focus
- ◆ Food Standards Agency
- ◆ Chemical Hazards Advisory Group
- ◆ UK Petroleum Industries Association

#### **Fisheries:**

- ◆ Sea Fisheries Committees
- ◆ Centre for Environmental, Fisheries and Aquatic Science
- ◆ Fisheries Research Service Marine Laboratory Aberdeen (Scotland)
- ◆ District Salmon Boards (Scotland)

#### **Coastal Environment**

- ◆ Local authority countryside and coastal environmental staff
- ◆ (Coastal) National Park staff

#### **Wildlife Welfare**

- ◆ Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
- ◆ Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
- ◆ Ulster Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

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### 3.1.3 Additional organisations potentially able to provide support include

- ◆ Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- ◆ British Trust for Ornithology
- ◆ Sea Mammal Research Unit
- ◆ National Trust / National Trust for Scotland
- ◆ County / local Wildlife Trusts
- ◆ Other NGO's
- ◆ Specialist environmental consultancies
- ◆ Academic and research institutions
- ◆ Aquaculture industry

### 3.2 Key EG personnel and their roles

Each of the key roles should be filled by the individuals most suited to the job and purpose, independent of their parent organisation or position within that organisation. They must be able to command respect and authority of personnel within the EG and the incident response units. Each should have one or more clearly identified deputies.

#### 3.2.1 *EG chair*

The role of the Chair is to ensure the EG undertakes its functions so as to enable provision of:

- ◆ the best possible health and environmental advice to all response units
- ◆ the management of a prompt and timely evaluation of the impact of the pollution incident.

##### 3.2.1.1 *Responsibilities*

- ◆ Management of the group
- ◆ Ensuring strategic objectives are met

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- ◆ Co-ordination of all group functions and activities
- ◆ Development and maintenance of most appropriate group structure
- ◆ In the simplest incidents, act as a conduit of advice (usually by telephone) to SOSREP, MCA or any response unit or local authority response coordination centre.

The EG chair must nominate at least one deputy; working 24 hours / day, 7 days / week may be required.

### ***3.2.1.2 Competencies***

- ◆ Manager,
- ◆ Good judgement
- ◆ Top communication skills and clear ability to mediate in times of debate over contentious issues
- ◆ Able to command respect and authority
- ◆ Ability to exercise delegated authority on behalf of and within Group.
- ◆ Ability to understand, interpret and address the full range of health and environmental issues.
- ◆ Ability to identify the key issues and the organisations and individual specialists who can provide support and advice to the group.
- ◆ Familiarity with relevant public health issues and the environmental features of the affected marine and coastal area.
- ◆ Familiarity with the NCP and this STop notice.
- ◆ Experience in maritime pollution response would be advantageous

The Chair should have had the opportunity to exercise the role, preferably with several of the other key members of the Group.

The Chair must be able to take an overview independently of personal professional interest and the working culture of his / her parent organisation. The Chair does not need to be a specialist.

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### 3.2.2 Environmental Liaison Officers (ELO)



#### **The role of the ELOs is to provide:**

- ◆ Public health and environmental advice to the response units
- ◆ the communications link between the EG and the response units.

The EG must have an ELO in each response unit established to deal with a pollution incident. ELOs need to have a comprehensive range of specialised competencies and must be appropriately qualified and trained for the role. It is the responsibility of the EG Chair to nominate ELOs for each response unit, taking into account the location, nature and scale of the incident, the views of the group and the expertise each unit is most likely to require. Because of the specialised nature of the ELO role, the Chair's task will be assisted by a pre-incident planned list of suitably qualified and experienced personnel.

#### **3.2.2.1 Responsibilities**

- ◆ Providing timely, prioritised and focussed health and environmental advice to the individual response unit where he / she is based.
- ◆ Providing an efficient and effective two-way communications link, with respect to health and environmental issues, between the response unit and the EG.
- ◆ Assimilating a sound and timely overview of the operational response units' health and environmental information requirements
- ◆ Ensuring feedback to the EG of all relevant information from the response unit on progress of the incident.

Only one ELO should be appointed to each response unit to ensure a clear focus of EG representation. However, depending on the scale of the incident, ELOs must have back up in the form of one or more deputies because health and environmental advice to the response units may be required 24hrs / day, 7 days / week. The SRC ELO will be required to be a member of the SRC Management Team and must also have appropriate administrative and technical support and assistance.

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It is particularly important that ELO's understand their role and links between the EG and the individual incident response units. Communications protocols between ELO's and the EG are critical and should be pre-planned for optimum operational effectiveness. ELO's are responsible for the management and passing of information within the EG remit only.

### **3.2.2.2 Competencies**

Clearly, no one individual is likely to fulfill all the competencies listed below. The competencies listing provides guidance to assist with the identification of the most appropriate individuals for the role, depending upon the nature of the incident.

#### **General competencies**

- ◆ A broad understanding of relevant public health and marine / coastal environmental issues, and comprehensive understanding of relevant local health and environmental resources, issues and priorities for protection.
- ◆ General understanding of relevant statutory and regulatory responsibilities of member organisations of core EG and ability to evaluate the implications of these in providing advice.
- ◆ Ability to balance a wide and potentially conflicting range of issues in presenting EG advice succinctly. This is particularly important, because, when there is insufficient time to consult the EG as a whole, ELO's may need to provide immediate, on-the-spot advice to the response units.
- ◆ Ability to exercise delegated authority on behalf of Group.
- ◆ Ability to command respect and authority within assigned response unit.
- ◆ Sound judgement.
- ◆ Ability to communicate clearly and succinctly.
- ◆ Experience in counter pollution response and understanding of Net Environmental Benefit Analysis.

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### Specialised competencies

#### SCU / MRC

- ◆ Familiarity with and understanding of technical issues relevant to assigned response units; e.g. shipping, salvage, pollutant behaviour, response options including dispersant use, efficacy and limitations.
- ◆ Marine ecology and science

#### SRC

- ◆ Ability to effectively represent the EG on the SRC Management and Technical Teams
- ◆ Familiarity with and understanding of pollutant behaviour, shore clean-up techniques and their efficacy and limitations, including dispersant use, and waste management and disposal issues.

ELO's must be able to take an overview independently of personal professional interest and the working culture of his / her parent organisation.

#### 3.2.3 Other key roles in the EG

In addition to the representatives of the core member bodies, depending on the scale, location and complexity of any marine pollution incident and associated response, there may be a need for a wide range of other key roles within a core EG. These are likely to include, but not be limited to the following:

- ◆ Impact assessment manager / coordinator
- ◆ Specialists according to nature of incident, e.g. Public Health advisors, chemists, marine ecologists, ornithologists, water quality, geologists.
- ◆ Administrative and secretarial management and support.
- ◆ Information and data managers (strong cross links to impact assessment manager & main link to data collection support groups).
- ◆ Media liaison representative.

#### 3.2.4 Additional roles

The core operational EG may also require support from:

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- ◆ Deputies for all key roles, particularly Chair and ELO's.
- ◆ Data collectors, loggers and analysts.
- ◆ Specialist observers to obtain environmental overviews of incident, particularly from any available aerial platforms
- ◆ Specialist 'monitors' at sensitive sites / complex responses.

The EG needs to provide environmental staff for SRC Shoreline Clean-up Assessment Teams<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> The purpose and role of Shoreline Clean-up Assessment Teams (SCAT) is described in the SRC STOp note (STOp x/2001). The key purposes of SCAT are to:

- assess the nature and extent of shoreline pollution;
- evaluate the actual and potential impact of shoreline pollution;
- identify and advise the SRC or other local authority response coordination centre on appropriate shoreline clean-up measures required to mitigate any adverse impacts of shoreline pollution.

3.3 Structure of Environment Group

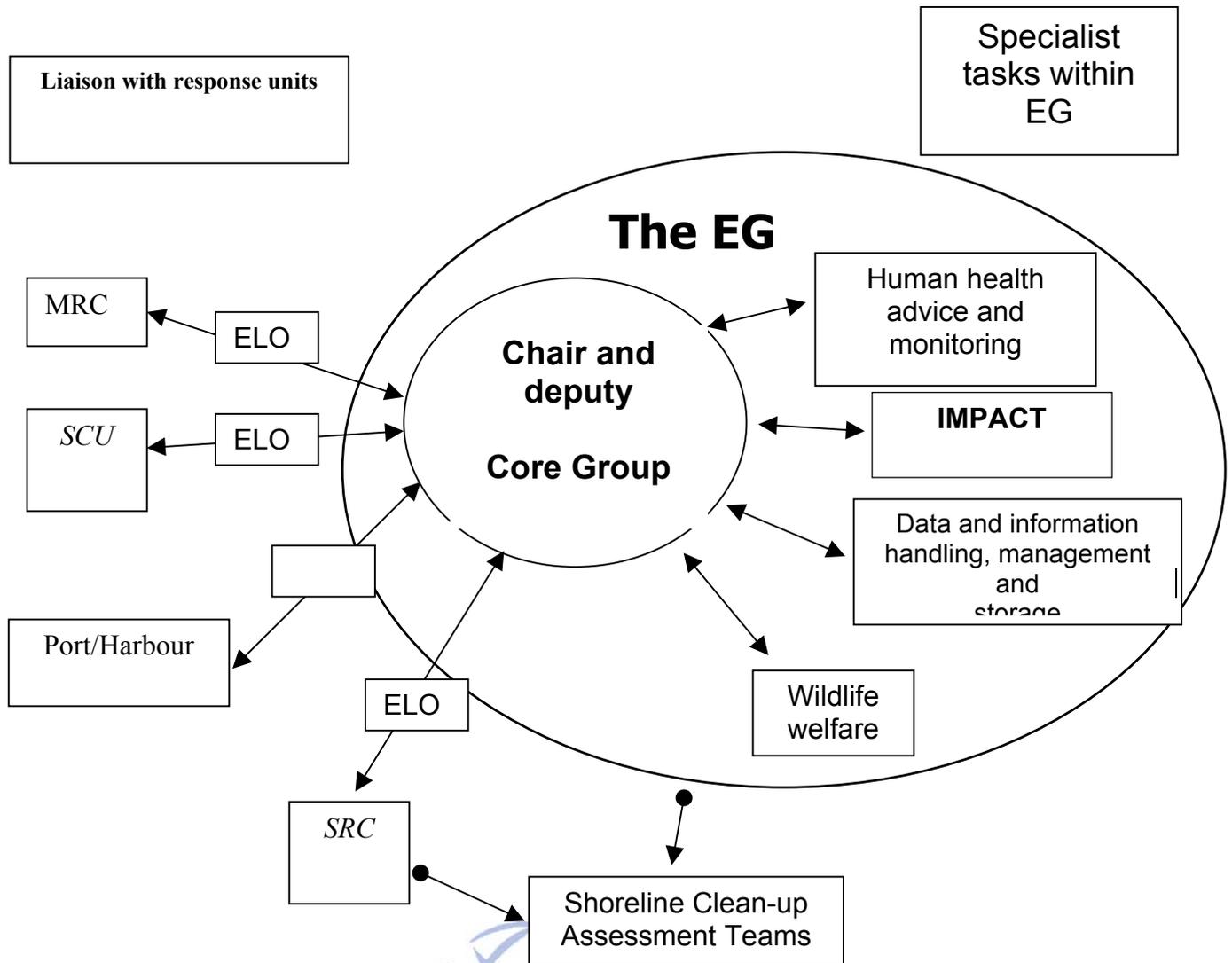


Fig. 1 Structure of EG in a major incident

#### 4.0 ESTABLISHMENT OF THE EG FOR MARITIME INCIDENT RESPONSE

This section amplifies the broad guidance on establishment of the EG provided in paragraphs 9.3 and L.12 - 16 of the NCP.

The ease of timely establishment of an operational EG and its fully effective working will be largely determined by whether:

- ◆ a Standing EG already exists in the locality of the incident.
- ◆ the Standing EG is fully aware and committed to its role and responsibilities and is adequately prepared.
- ◆ the Standing EG comprises the appropriate complement of expertise to deal with the incident in hand.

The benefits of having a standing EG in place, particularly in the event of a major and or complex incident, should not be underestimated.

#### 4.1 MCA routine alerting procedure

In the event of a maritime incident threatening to or actually causing marine pollution, the MCA have a routine alerting procedure to inform all organisations likely to be involved in response to the incident.

HM Coastguard will routinely call the duty MCA Principal Counter Pollution and Salvage Officer, who in turn will contact the duty MCA Counter Pollution Branch scientist. The MCA duty scientist or his representative will call the appropriate national contact points for the following organisations:

- ◆ Under the Chemical Hazards Advisory Group, the Chemical Incident Response Service will provide toxicology advice and alert Health Authorities, National Focus or chemical incident provider units as required
- ◆ The Fisheries Department
- ◆ The Statutory Nature Conservation Body
- ◆ The Environmental Regulator

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#### 4.2 Alerting procedure where a Standing EG exists

The national contact point for each organisation follows their own internal call out procedures to inform agreed local representatives of the appropriate standing EG.

In addition, the MCA may directly notify the appropriate EG through predetermined supplementary alert channels.

Clearly, where a standing EG exists, the way forward is already pre-planned and largely pre-determined.

#### 4.3 Alerting procedure and EG establishment where a Standing EG does not already exist

The response protocols for each organisation differ but each has a mechanism for contributing to the setting up of an EG. The NCP outlines the manner in which an EG would be initiated by the MCA contacting the three core (statutory) bodies.

The three core bodies will elect a Chair between them who would initially determine an operational location. The Chair will appoint and dispatch ELO's as required to response units already established.

The chairman and core members will decide whether to expand the Group's membership to include representatives of other organisations with regard to the scale and nature of the incident. The chairman and core members will also decide, whether to and when, it is necessary to convene the EG close to the scene of the incident and ensure the Group is co-located with the SRC, if established. Local and regional contingency plans should identify suitable accommodation and support facilities for the EG.

Next, the core members (public health advisor, nature conservation, fisheries department, environment regulator and MCA representative) nominate a chair for the EG as quickly as possible. As the incident unfolds, the Chair of the Group may change according to the change of phase of the incident and the availability of resources.

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#### 4.4 Standing down the EG

The role of an EG will evolve over the period of any incident. The requirement for certain key EG functions and members will cease as the relevant response units complete their tasks and stand down. Provision of operational advice to an SRC is likely to extend far beyond provision of advice on acute health issues, salvage or at-sea response. Operational advice may continue to be required by a local authority shore clean-up control centre after an SRC stands down, and impact assessment is likely to be a protracted task. Redeployment of staff from acute operational response advisory roles to, inter alia, advising on long-term clean up response on difficult shores or impact assessment tasks may be appropriate and necessary.

The decision to stand down will be taken by the EG. Whilst standing down the advisory function of the EG will be largely guided by the response units, the decision to stand down any impact assessment operations will be driven by scientific criteria.



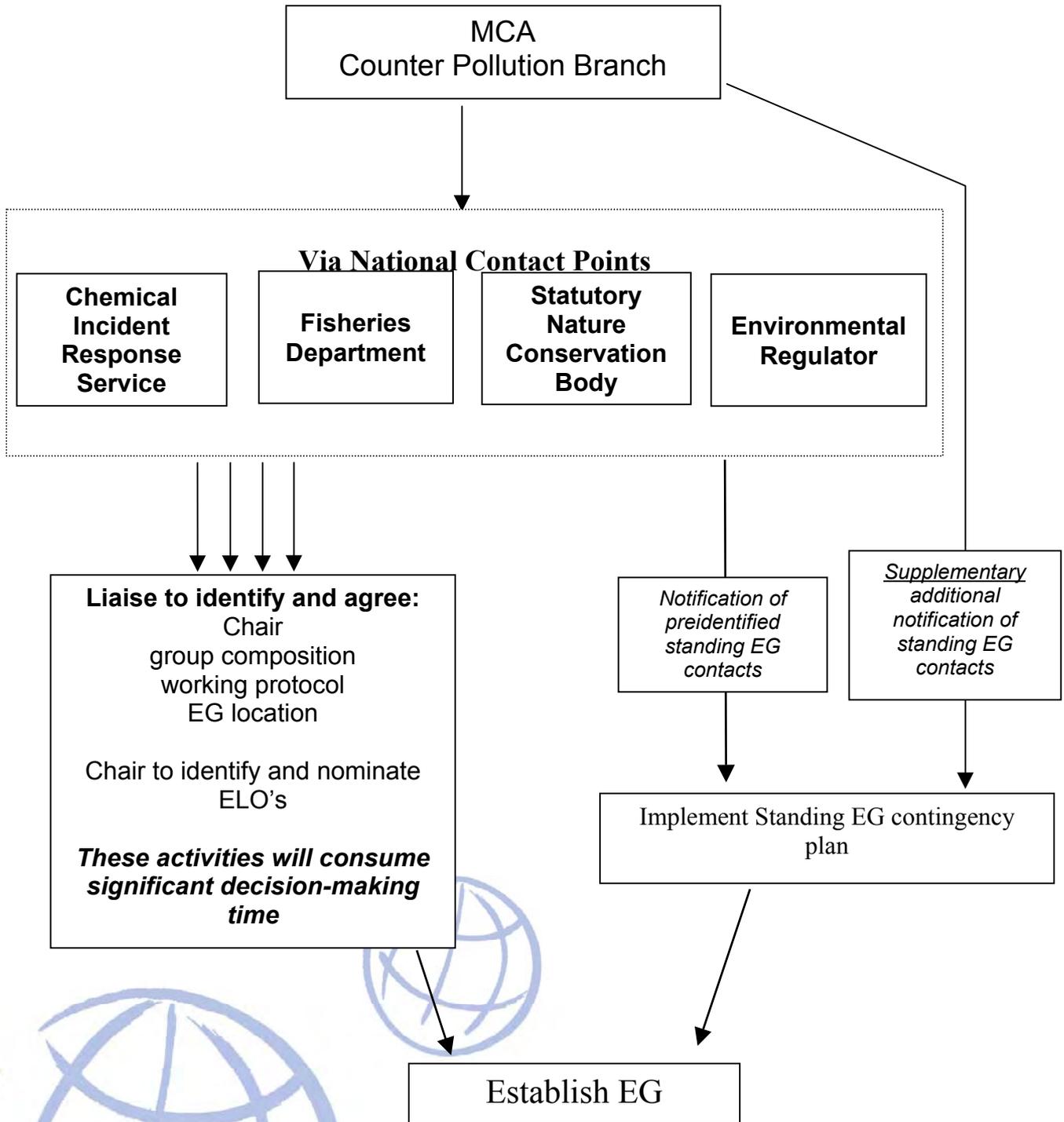


Fig. 2 Alert procedure and establishment of the Environment Group

## 5. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A STANDING EG AND CONTINGENCY PLANNING

Advice from the EG will be required at an early stage in an incident. Pre-determined membership (including contact details), pre-identification of key roleholders and preprepared access to essential health and environmental information are vital if the group is to be formed swiftly and advice is to be timely and accurate.

The benefits of forming a 'standing' EG are manifold:

- ◆ The EG will be able to establish itself promptly and independently of any response units.
- ◆ Provision of health and environmental advice will be timely and coordinated.
- ◆ Organisational representatives will understand the roles and responsibilities of the other players in the Group.
- ◆ Individuals will already know each other and their respective areas of expertise.
- ◆ Particular roles and tasks contributing with Group operation can be agreed and pre-allocated e.g. Chair, Deputy, ELO's, Impact assessment staff, SCAT members and specialists.
- ◆ A working protocol is already agreed, promoting a timely, committed and co-ordinated start.
- ◆ Information about health and environmental sensitivities will be pre-identified and collated into readily useable formats.
- ◆ There will be a collective understanding of the role and function of the EG within the overall incident management process.

Where standing groups are not established then health and environmental advice to response units may be delayed and poorly co-ordinated.

National consistency of approach is important. A maritime pollution incident affecting more than one EG area of jurisdiction will require a common approach in the provision of advice on minimising impact on public health and the environment.

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### 5.1 Geographical coverage

The geographical boundaries of Standing EG's should meet local needs, but be widely known and interface with adjoining groups. MCA have accepted the role of coordinating and disseminating information on EG locations and boundaries.

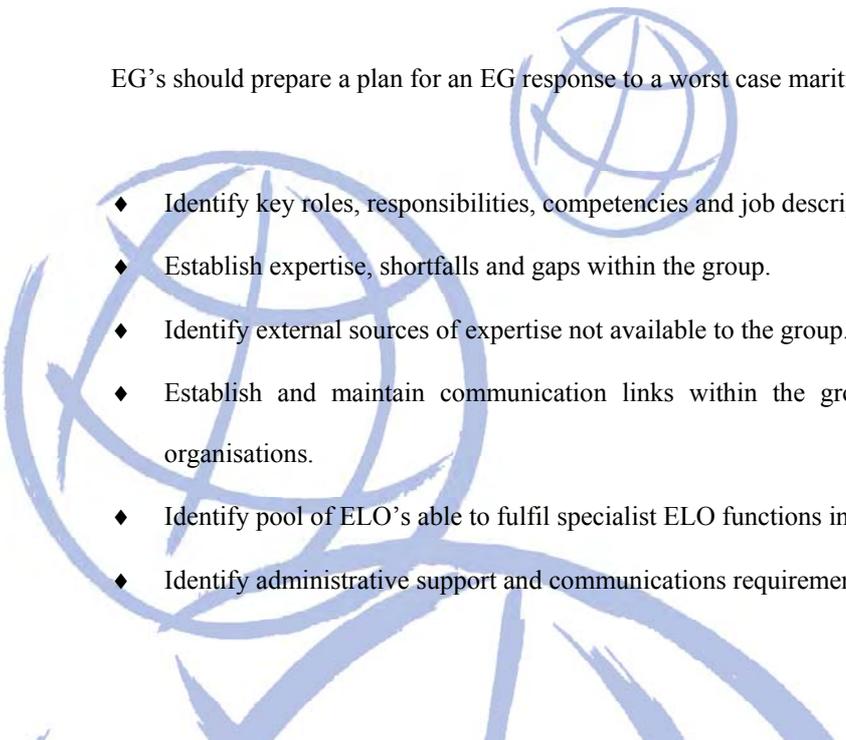
In establishing the area to be covered by a new Standing EG it is important that the area is logical i.e.:

- ◆ has easily defined outer (coastal) limits
- ◆ encompasses the whole of any estuary system
- ◆ abuts adjacent pre-existing Standing EG's
- ◆ encompasses ecologically meaningful areas

Whilst it would be administratively convenient if the geographical limits of Standing EG's coincide with the boundaries of the participating organisations, it is highly unlikely, and agreement should be sought to identify a practical and workable area with contingency in place for amalgamation where an incident impacts more than one Standing Environment Group (SEG) area.

### 5.2 Suggested SEG Work Programme

EG's should prepare a plan for an EG response to a worst case maritime oil and or chemical incident scenario to:

- 
- ◆ Identify key roles, responsibilities, competencies and job description
  - ◆ Establish expertise, shortfalls and gaps within the group.
  - ◆ Identify external sources of expertise not available to the group.
  - ◆ Establish and maintain communication links within the group, with adjacent EG's and with parent organisations.
  - ◆ Identify pool of ELO's able to fulfil specialist ELO functions in complex incident response.
  - ◆ Identify administrative support and communications requirements

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- ◆ Establish links with local contingency plans: port and harbour plans, local authority oil and chemical response plans.
- ◆ Identify suitable EG operational accommodation (co-located with and independently of an SRC)
- ◆ Establish and maintain and appropriate health and environmental databases.
- ◆ Undertake generic risk assessments for public health and of environmental resources within Group's geographical area.
- ◆ Develop generic environmental advice, based on NEBA, for the use of oil spill dispersants, aggressive clean-up techniques, leave alone sites, site protection prioritisation.
- ◆ Develop Impact Assessment priorities, organisation, environmental baselines and project management.
- ◆ Identify potential EG members to contribute to SRC Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Teams. members
- ◆ Identify training needs for group of all disciplines.
- ◆ Develop administrative protocols for information and data management and record keeping.
- ◆ Develop health and safety protocol
- ◆ Write, exercise and review the Group plan.



# The Environment Group for Maritime Incident Response in the UK

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## The Formation of The Environment Group in Response to a Maritime Incident

- Is one of Lord Donaldson's key recommendations in the:
  - Review of Salvage and Intervention and their Command and Control

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## The Environment Group (EG)

- EG Function set down in UK National Contingency Plan
  - Section 9
  - and Appendix L

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## The Environment Group

- Entirely new approach
- Simple concept
- Clearer lines of communication
- Now well established in the UK
- Not another layer of bureaucracy but streamlining of the (important) process

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## The Environment Group

- Role is purely advisory
- Group has no formal powers
- Though constituent members have statutory powers (outwith the Group)

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## The Environment Group

- EG has vital role in response to any maritime incident
- Aim to minimise Environmental impact of the incident in the widest sense
- Provision of Env advice to all response units on all environmental aspects
- Assessment of environmental risk and impact

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## Role of the Environment Group

- Main Function - To provide advice and guidance to 3 Primary UK operational response cells:
  - SOSREP and Salvage Control Unit
  - Marine Response Centre
  - Shoreline Response Centre

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## Incident Response - prior to Donaldson

- SEA EMPRESS - Milford Haven 1996
  - Limited environmental advice into Marine Response Cell
  - Comprehensive environmental advice into Shoreline Cell
  - Significant input into Sea Empress Environmental Evaluation Committee

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## EG - Key Tasks - The EG Provides advice on:

- Environmental implications of salvage and oil spill response strategies
- Potential and real impact on human health
- Resolution of conflicting environmental issues and priorities

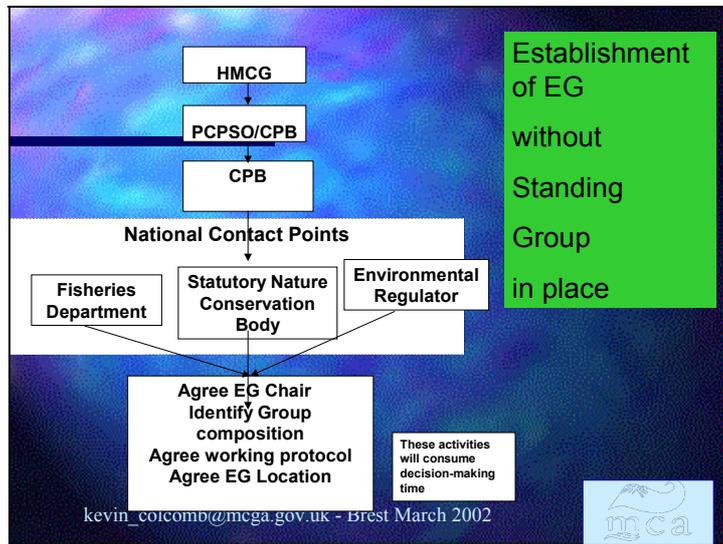
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## Establishing the EG in the UK

- 1st contact likely from HMCG who inform MCA Counter Pollution Branch
- MCA CPB scientist triggers EG formation
- MCA will then contact:
  - Statutory Nature Conservation Body
  - Environmental Regulator
  - Fisheries Department

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## Establishing the EG

- First priority = to provide immediate env advice
- Then agree group formation and nominate chair
- Quicker if Standing Group exists

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## Statutory Environmental Bodies in the UK

- Environmental Regulator - Air and Water quality, pollution control
- Fisheries Department - Sea fisheries protection
- Nature Conservation Body - Wildlife and Natural Heritage

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## Membership of the EG

- CORE MEMBERSHIP
  - Environmental Regulator
  - Statutory Nature Conservation Body
  - Fisheries Department
  - Public Health Officer
  - MCA
- Dependant upon location, nature and scale of the incident
- Other organisations may be invited to join EG at the discretion of the chair

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## EG Membership (1)

- The core membership may choose to invite:
  - Sea Fisheries Committee
  - National Park Authorities
  - Local Health Authority
  - HSE
  - National Focus

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## EG Membership (2)

- Oil Company - through IPIECA - expertise and facilities
- Animal Welfare bodies - RSPCA, SSPCA USPCA
- Bird casualty record collation - RSPB
- NGO's
  - Local Wildlife Trusts
  - Local Animal Welfare Trusts

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## Assessment of Long Term Impact

- "Major Incident"
- Monitoring of long, medium and short term impact
- Task **is in addition** to operational advice
- Discrete group to carry out function
- Focus on collation and evaluation of environmental impact of the incident

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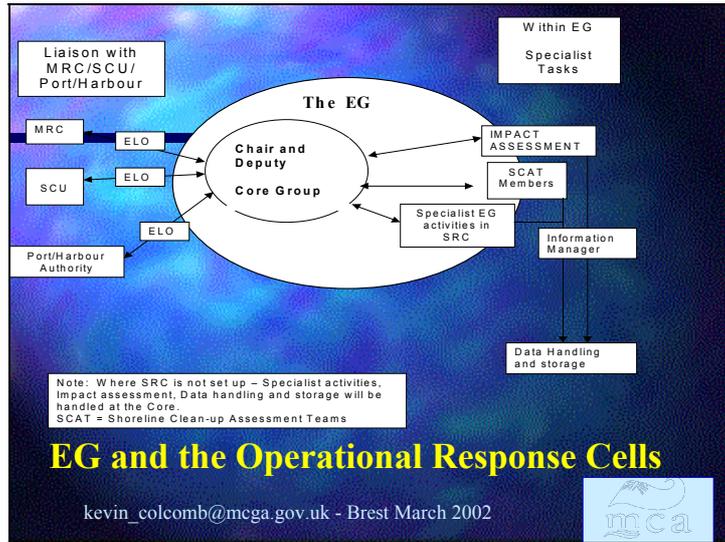
## Assessment of Long Term Impact

- SEA EMPRESS ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION COMMITTEE (SEEEC)
- Strong co-ordination
- £2m+
- 30+ Projects
- Known baselines
- Recommendations to Government
- Taken account by Donaldson

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### The EG and the Shoreline Response Centre (major incident impacting shoreline)

- NCP does not specify home for EG but:
- EG likely to gravitate to SRC if protracted shoreline clean-up is required

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## The EG and the SRC (major incident)

- EG representative on Management Team
- EG Rep on SRC Strategy Team?
- EG lead with waste disposal sub-group
- EG representative on H&S sub-group
- EG participation in aerial surveys
- EG input into admin protocol
  - stateboards
  - record keeping formats
  - SOCRATES?

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## Use of Dispersants

- Environment Group will have a view
- But decisions on dispersant use will be made by the UK fisheries department in consultation with the nature conservation body

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## The Environment Group Role of the Environmental Liaison Officer (ELO)

- EG must have ELO in each response cell
- EG Chair to identify suitable ELO
- ELO should be fully trained for role
- SEG should agree list of suitable people
- ELO can be more specialist activity
- Major/complex incident may require several ELO's

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## The Environment Group Responsibilities of the ELO

- Providing timely, prioritised, focussed advice to assigned response unit
- Providing effective two-way comms link between EG and response cell
- Providing feedback on operational activity response progress to the EG

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## The Environment Group (UK) Role of ELO's in the SRC

- No precedent yet for EG / SRC
- EG likely to be accommodated adjacent or within SRC
- Major incident will likely require - well thought through integration protocol for EG/SRC

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## The Environment Group Role of ELO's in the MRC

- Probably only one ELO in Marine Response Cell (may require 24hr working - deputies)
- Will need to familiarise with technical issues of :
  - at-sea response options - dispersants, recovery etc

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## The Environment Group Role of ELO's in the SCU

- Definitely only one ELO in SCU
- Useful to become familiar with salvage procedures
- Will represent EG at daily SCU meetings
  - SOSREP, PCPSO
  - Salvors
  - Salvage advisers
  - Shipowners

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## Role of the EG Chair

- To ensure EG undertakes its functions to provide:
- Best health and environmental advice to all response centres
- Management of prompt evaluation of environmental impact

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## Responsibilities of the EG Chair

- Environment Group Management
- Meeting strategic objectives
- Coordination of all Group functions

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## Competencies of the EG Chair

- Manager
- Good judgement
- Top communication skills
- Commands respect and authority
- Ability to identify what is important
- Understands health and env issues
- Understands NCP and EG STOp

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## Who should Chair?

- Specialist?
- Appropriate organisation according to nature of the incident?
- Not necessarily so
- Ideal chair is not necessarily specialist but able to take an overview independently of personal professional interest

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## Standing Environment Groups

- What are the benefits of having Standing Groups in place?
- What are the potential consequences of **not** having Standing Groups in place?

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## Standing Environment Groups The Benefits

- Immediate response, immediate advice
- Contact protocol established
- Working protocol established
- Group expertise identified (s&w's)
- Membership understand each other
- Chairs and ELO's agreed
- Practised Group understanding of local issues and sensitivities

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## What if **no** Standing Environment Group in place?

- Delay in response overall
- Delay in identification of
  - Chair
  - ELO
  - Meeting place
  - Communications protocol
  - Working protocol
- Slow to provide advice in required format / timescale

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## Establishing Standing EG's - The Process

- Agree main players
- Agree preliminary geographical coverage
- Arrange inaugural meeting to agree:  
[Local authorities (EPO's) can help set up meetings]
  - The requirement for the group
  - The core membership
  - Group working protocol

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Microsoft Access - [site specific response data]

THIS FORM IS FOR RECORDING THE DETAILS OF EACH SENSITIVE SITE WITHIN THE PLAN AREA AND LINKING THE DETAILS TO RELEVANT MARINE CELLS

ID - site entry: 16 sheet number: TA eastings: 4160 northings: 1645

site name: Kilmsea Caravan Park

ID - sensitivity: Geological Conservation Review Site (GCR)

comments: Site is a designated RAMSAR, SPA and SSSI. Also as a National Nature Reserve (NNR) and as a Heritage Coast. Yorkshire Wildlife Trust site extends from Spurn Head Lighthouse to (approx) TA 4200 1525.

ID - m	cell start point	cell end point
15	Kilmsea Caravan Park	East of Spurn Head Lighthouse
0		

Record: 1 of 1

Buttons: Next Record, Previous Record, Add Record, Save Record, open form: catalogue - marine cells, open form: sensitivity categories, Preview Report

Site database - ongoing work

## Humberside SEG - Task list:

- Initial operating location
- Admin materials & arrangements
- Job descriptions & roles
- Presumed names (esp ELO's)
- Data gathering → EG database
- Booming plans

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Standing Environment Groups in England and Wales (September 2002)

Group	Area	Chairman	Secretary	Phone	Fax	Website
1	North East	John Smith	Jane Doe	01234 567890	01234 567891	www.northeastseg.org
2	North West	John Smith	Jane Doe	01234 567890	01234 567891	www.northwestseg.org
3	Yorkshire	John Smith	Jane Doe	01234 567890	01234 567891	www.yorkshireseg.org
4	East of England	John Smith	Jane Doe	01234 567890	01234 567891	www.eastofenglandseg.org
5	West of England	John Smith	Jane Doe	01234 567890	01234 567891	www.westofenglandseg.org
6	South East	John Smith	Jane Doe	01234 567890	01234 567891	www.southeastseg.org
7	South West	John Smith	Jane Doe	01234 567890	01234 567891	www.southwestseg.org
8	Wales	John Smith	Jane Doe	01234 567890	01234 567891	www.walesseg.org
9	North East	John Smith	Jane Doe	01234 567890	01234 567891	www.northeastseg.org
10	North West	John Smith	Jane Doe	01234 567890	01234 567891	www.northwestseg.org
11	Yorkshire	John Smith	Jane Doe	01234 567890	01234 567891	www.yorkshireseg.org
12	East of England	John Smith	Jane Doe	01234 567890	01234 567891	www.eastofenglandseg.org
13	West of England	John Smith	Jane Doe	01234 567890	01234 567891	www.westofenglandseg.org
14	South East	John Smith	Jane Doe	01234 567890	01234 567891	www.southeastseg.org
15	South West	John Smith	Jane Doe	01234 567890	01234 567891	www.southwestseg.org

Standing Groups set-up in England and Wales

2002

## The Environment Group Admin Support

- Group co-ordination
- Contact protocols
- Lines of communication
- Channeling of information
- Updating status boards
- Filing

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## Environment Group STOp Notice

- Produced by MCA
- To expand on and reinforce NCP guidance
- Written by multi-agency drafting group
- Posted on MCA web site
- Living document - to be revised and updated according to lessons learnt

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## Why then Environment Group???

- Why do you respond to oil spills?
- Is Environment a major part of the rationale?
- How will you demonstrate effective environmental consultation to:
  - Electorate
  - Regulators
  - Auditors
  - Press and Media?

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## Why then Environment Group???

- In your oil spill response experience:
  - Have you achieved overall consistency of approach?
  - Have you satisfied responsible statutory agencies on environmental aspects of the operation?
  - Have operational cells succeeded in obtaining timely and consistent environmental advice?

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## Recent UK incidents with Environment Group setup

■ Norwegian Dream/Ever Decent	Public health / oil threat
■ Multitank Ascania	Chemical Public health / Oil threat
■ Dole America	Oil threat
■ Sonia	Oil threat
■ Lagic	Oil threat
■ Lysfoss	Oil threat + spillage
■ Ash	Oil threat
■ Bilbao	Toxic gas threat / public safety
■ Willy	Public safety / oil threat
■ Kodima	Oil threat

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## Thank you for your attention

Contact details:

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- MCA web site: [www.mcga.gov.uk](http://www.mcga.gov.uk)
  - for UK National Contingency Plan
  - Environment Group SToP notice
  - Shoreline Response Centre SToP notice

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