

# Accidental Maritime Pollution and Local Authorities Joint Declaration

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The Channel, a major axis of the European transport system, is one of the most heavily-used sea areas in the world.

Each day, an average of almost 500 vessels carrying over 300 tonnes of goods pass through (a rate of one vessel every three minutes), in addition to several cross-Channel journeys involving passengers and goods. Those figures are added to by fishing (almost 4 000 fishing vessels in service, drawn from the French and British fleets as well as the fleets of other countries) and by pleasure-boating (350 000 vessels registered, divided in to roughly equal parts between France and Great Britain).

Maritime activity in the Channel is significant, being particularly intense in the Dover Strait, and continues to grow. To this must be added the development of other uses of the sea area: exploitation of the undersea depths, and marine energy.

However, in spite of the intensity of those activities, the Channel has – happily – suffered few cases of accidental maritime pollution of any significance. It is also

important to consider the entirety of illegal dumping amongst the sources of maritime pollution along the French and British coasts, even if their number has fallen over the last few years thanks to the prevention and curbing policy followed in France and the United Kingdom.

In the face of all those risks, few local authorities along the Channel coast are currently sufficiently prepared to face up to or to deal with cases of maritime pollution. We ought to remember that in France, the management of land-based operations is shared between the Prefect and the Mayor, depending on the extent of the pollution, and that the Départements and Regions are most often called upon to provide material and / or financial support.

Except in Bretagne, most communes or groups of communes have not had to face up to maritime pollution in their territory, so they do not have in place communal protection plans, training plans for elected officials and for staff, tailored management of materials that may be needed in case of pollution, and sufficient knowledge of

procedures for seeking compensation.

Sharing this finding, representatives of the Local authorities' consortium for the Protection of the Bretagne Coastline, Vigipol, the Local authorities' consortium of the Côte d'Opale, the Nord-Pas-de-Calais Region, the Picardy Region, the Brittany Region, the Basse-Normandie Region, and the Haute-Normandie Region, meeting in Fécamp, have decided to extend the co-operation that they have begun in the context of the CAMIS (Channel Arc Manche Integrated Strategy – Une stratégie intégrée pour la Manche) project, on questions linked to maritime safety and to the management of maritime pollution.

That co-operation is carried out in the framework of the competences of the various regions, and in the context of implementing a European maritime policy on which the regions pin their hopes. They wish for that strengthened co-operation to be carried out in partnership with the other stakeholders affected by Channel coastline protection, and that it should cover exchanges of information and joint actions aimed at promoting:

- information for elected officials of the Channel coastal area on the risks of maritime pollution and the ways of preparing for those risks in the best conditions,
- training for elected officials and members of staff,
- defending the interests of local authorities that have fallen victim to maritime pollution,
- local authorities coming together to organise resources in the fight against pollution,
- joint working between representative of local authorities and national authorities as regards the risks, the prevention, and the management of maritime pollution,
- Franco-British co-operation at Channel level in respect of maritime safety, as well as the prevention and management of maritime pollution,
- any action that contributes to improving the ability for co-ordinated intervention on the part of local authorities and maritime organisations.

