

**Item 9 - Question Time**

To the Leader of the Council

"Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, Category 1 Responders (Local Authorities, the Emergency Services and NHS bodies) are required to put in place emergency plans and to take co-ordinated action in response to emergencies. The Act defines an emergency as "an event or situation that threatens damage to the environment only if it involves, cause or may cause contamination of land, water or air with biological, chemical or radio-active matter, or disruption or destruction of plant life or animal life". Section 2 of the Act places a specific duty upon Category 1 Responders to prevent an emergency, reduce, control or mitigate its effects.

What resources does Highland Council have in place to deal with a tier 2 oil spill (7-700 Tonnes) which may affect the shorelines of the Cromarty Firth and the Moray Firth, and what resources do other organisations have, and what contingency plans are in place?"

Response to Mrs Robertson

The Council maintains a stockpile of oil spill response equipment which is located in Inverness. This comprises 510 metres of Shore Sealing Boom, 510 metres of Sea Skirt Boom and 500 metres of Sorbent Boom, together with pumps, tanks, PPE and ancillary equipment. The stockpile was most recently deployed to Kilchoan when the MV Lybslink Seaways went aground in February 2015.

Approximately 25 Community Services staff are trained as Beach Supervisors (IMO Level 1) to manage shoreline clean-up operations. If the spill is beyond the capability of Highland Council, the Council can respond by engaging specialist oil spill contractors, such as Braemar Howells, Briggs Environmental or Oil Spill Response Ltd. All costs incurred as a result of a tanker spill can in principle be recovered from the IOPC Funds, an international regime of liability and compensation for oil pollution. Further provision for assistance is made under the National Contingency Plan which allows for the MCA's stockpile of equipment (and advice) to be made freely available if clean-up of the shoreline is beyond the capability of Highland Council.

(\*1 Under the National Contingency Plan a Tier 2 Spill is classified as a spill 'beyond the response capability of one local authority').

A comprehensive inventory of resources available to the Port of Cromarty Firth (PoCF) is listed in Section 6 of its Oil Spill Contingency Plan Revision 7. To summarise, the PoCF has a Tier 2 contract in place with Briggs Environmental Ltd. to provide 20 metres of Shore Sealing Boom, 120 metres of Sea Skirt Boom, 1 Skimmer, 1 Fastank, Sorbent Booms as well as ancillary equipment; and an arrangement is in place with the Operator of Nigg Oil Terminal to make available their equipment which includes a further 50 metres of Shore Sealing Boom, 100 metres of Sea Skirt Boom, a Skimmer, Fastank, Pump, Sorbent Boom and quantity of ancillary equipment.

Local to the Cromarty Firth, Sureclean Ltd and MSIS have equipment to assist a shoreline response, as well as limited facilities to treat oily waste.

The MCA maintains three stockpiles of shoreline response equipment across the UK, the closest being in Dundee. National and international assets are also available from specialist oil spill contractors.

Four PoCF staff have completed oil spill response training accredited to IMO Level 2.

Relevant contingency plans include, (i) PoCF Oil Spill Contingency Plan Revision 7, (ii) Nigg Oil Terminal Oil Spill Response Plan, (iii) Highland Council Oil Spill Contingency Plan (currently under revision), (iv) Highlands and Islands Local Resilience Partnership Response Guidance, (v) National Contingency Plan for Marine Pollution from Shipping and Offshore Installations.