

Press release

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North Sea industrial estate - A new year with new opportunities for the habitat

Schutzgemeinschaft Deutsche Nordseeküste e.V. (SDN) urgently calls for an end to the ignorance of the possible consequences of further industrialisation of the North Sea

German North Sea. 'It is high time for the North Sea habitat to really rethink the consequences of human behaviour,' said SDN Chairman, Mayor Gerd-Christian Wagner, urging political and economic common sense. 'It is urgently necessary to act now and not tomorrow or the day after a disaster!' Instead, possible effects on the environment must always be considered and taken seriously from now on. 'Instead, in addition to extensive shipping, the North Sea is being further clogged with gas and oil extraction, gravel and sand mining, sludge fishing, dredged material dumping, CO2 storage as well as cable and pipe laying and launch options for space rockets in addition to huge wind farms.' Instead, the SDN chairman calls on the new federal government to be formed in particular to look for smarter solutions for the future.

Accident in the North Sea

'And to make matters worse, this expansion craze is increasingly jeopardising the safety of shipping and thus the marine environment and its inhabitants,' explains captain and sea pilot Ulrich Birstein, second SDN chairman. For example, it should be borne in mind that the accident involving the oil tanker EVENTIN, which was en route to Egypt, could have happened just over a day later off the coast of Rügen in the middle of the North Sea - and that in the approaching bad weather and without rocky protection from the strong winds. 'At some point, even the emergency command's helpful options will be exhausted!' This is particularly true in view of the potential land consumption of the planned offshore wind farms, which would extremely restrict the traffic space for ships such as the EVENTIN oil tanker or the mega container freighters with their huge sail areas. It is therefore important to take a holistic view of the possible impacts and to look for solutions that can at least reduce this ever-growing hazard potential.

Necessities

'The problem is simple,' the SDN chairman points out, 'a single serious accident can be enough to destroy the North Sea with its Wadden Sea and the estuaries of the Elbe and Weser as a habitat for humans and animals.' At least one emergency tugboat with a minimum bollard pull of 130 tonnes and a response time of one hour must be on standby at each spill site to mitigate the risk, and the responsible authorities must have the authority to issue instructions and access it if necessary. In addition, seamless and fail-safe maritime surveillance must be guaranteed for the entire southern North Sea. 'Our motto must be to really learn from past mistakes and take preventative action from

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now on. Because the North Sea habitat must not be allowed to degenerate into an industrial wasteland,' both chairmen agree.

SDN demands

- Environmentally friendly reconsideration of expansion and utilisation targets, especially in connection with offshore wind.
- The safety of shipping must be prioritised.
- Prevention to avoid and combat accidents instead of forced reaction in the event of an accident.
- Stationing emergency tugs of suitable size/performance close to where they are needed.
- Assumption of costs for local emergency tugs and pollution spill response vessels; also by wind farm operators.
- Practical clarification of the possible use of tugs and support vessels within wind farms.
- Acquisition of technical support equipment according to effectiveness criteria.
- Stationing pollutant spill response vessels as close as possible and on a permanent basis.
- More and larger collapsible vessels for oil clean-up at sea.
- Oil and waste clean-up as early as possible away from islands, mudflats and coasts.
- Clear regulation of responsibilities on the part of the authorities / especially in the EEZ.
- Early involvement of the coastal districts as regional disaster control authorities.
- Extension of the existing pilotage system to the EEZ.
- Accident prevention before accident management!

With kind request for publication,

SDN Schutzgemeinschaft Deutsche Nordseeküste e.V.

- Pressestelle -

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Additional information:

The Schutzgemeinschaft Deutsche Nordseeküste e.V. (SDN)

is a supra-regional and non-profit environmental protection umbrella organisation that was founded in 1973 in response to extensive pollution of the North Sea. Since then, the conservation organisation has been committed to the protection of the North Sea as a living, economic and natural environment on a professional and cross-party basis. It serves around 200 local authorities, districts, nature conservation organisations, institutes, associations and individual members as a mouthpiece for the public as well as the ministerial administrations and parliaments of the federal government and the four North Sea coastal states. The common goal is to protect the unique features and beauty of the North Sea, the Wadden Sea and the neighbouring coastline from harmful human intervention and to find solutions to the problems of North Sea protection.

Some of the measures taken in recent decades in which the SDN has represented the interests of the coast as a lobby organisation and which are now considered to have been largely dealt with are the dumping of dilute acid, waste and sewage sludge, the emergency towing concept, antifouling, air monitoring, ballast water, tank cleaning, MARPOL I to IV and the acquisition of modern emergency tugs for the North Sea and Baltic Sea, as well as the Lower Elbe at present.

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