

[News story: Master and owner charged for illegal salvage of sunken vessel](#)

Dutch company Friendship Offshore BV has been convicted of conducting an unlicensed salvaging operation on a sunken merchant vessel named the SS Harrovian in 2016. The case was heard at Newcastle Crown Court on the 26 July 2018, in a prosecution brought by the MMO.

The court heard how in August 2016 MMO officers, acting on information relating to a vessel operating an illegal salvage of a wreck 70 miles south west of the Isles of Scilly, were deployed to intercept and inspect the vessel.

This inspection resulted in the discovery of approx. £90,000 worth of copper and steel. The vessel's master, Walter Bakker, admitted that he did not have the relevant marine licence and demonstrated how he had dimmed the vessel's Automatic Identification System (AIS) in order to avoid detection. The vessel was subsequently detained to Falmouth for further inspection.

Analysis revealed that the vessel had conducted three unlicensed salvage operations on the wreck of the SS Harrovian. The SS Harrovian was built by Bartram & Sons, Ltd, Sunderland in 1914 and was sunk on a voyage from New York to Le Havre by the German submarine U-69 in the English Channel in 1916.

During the sentencing, the judge referred to the fact that the SS Harrovian was an important heritage asset and despite being at sea, was still of considerable heritage value.

At the initial hearing in February 2018, the defendants pleaded guilty to charges reflecting the three unlicensed salvaging operations they conducted. The MMO also made application for a confiscation order under the Proceeds of Crime Confiscation Order (POCA) with the assistance of the North East Regional Asset Recovery Team.

Walter Bakker was fined £2,000. Friendship Offshore BV was fined £6,000 and £44,930 costs. The confiscation order against the company was agreed at £609,086 with an actual realisable amount assessed at £190,643, to be paid within three months.

An MMO spokesperson said:

This positive outcome was made possible by strong team working between the MMO, Historic England and the North East Regional Asset Recovery Team.

This case is very important and shows that we will take action against those deliberately avoiding the required consents in order to make a profit. The SS Harrovian is an important heritage asset and this result sends out a clear message that vessels of this

nature should not be exploited.

News story: Statement on post-elections human rights situation in Zimbabwe

The European Union Delegation, the Heads of Mission of EU Member States present in Harare (France, Germany, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom) and the Heads of Mission of Canada, Switzerland and the United States of America issued the following statement in Harare on 7 August 2018:

The Heads of Mission of the EU, Canada, Switzerland and the United States of America note with grave concern the eruption of violence and occurrence of serious human rights violations following the peaceful election on 30 July 2018. These tragic events stand in sharp contrast to the high hopes and expectations for a peaceful, inclusive, transparent and credible election in Zimbabwe.

The Heads of Mission express their condolences to the families of the victims.

The Heads of Mission condemn the violence, attacks, and acts of intimidation targeted at opposition leaders and supporters. These human rights violations have no place in a democratic society and contravene the fundamental tenets of international human rights standards.

The Heads of Mission urge the government to respect the rights of the Zimbabwean people as enshrined in the Constitution. All allegations of incitement to violence or violent acts, as well as vandalism and destruction of property, should be investigated in accordance with the rule of law, and perpetrators held legally responsible.

The Heads of Mission welcome the President's commitment to establish an independent commission to investigate the violence against civilians and look forward to the commission starting its work as soon as possible and reporting its findings in a transparent manner.

The Heads of Mission call on the Government to ensure that the Zimbabwean Defence Forces act with restraint, in full respect of international human rights norms and their constitutional role.

The Heads of Mission call on all stakeholders to act responsibly, to adhere to the principles of the Peace Pledge, to pursue peaceful and legal resolution of their grievances and to uphold the integrity of the political and electoral process.

Further information

Follow the Foreign Office on Twitter [@foreignoffice](#) and [Facebook](#)

Press release: Threatened sand dunes given a new lease of LIFE

Sand dunes across England are set for a golden future following £4.3 million worth of funding to help restore and protect these at risk habitats.

The funding – awarded to a partnership led by Natural England as part of the European Union’s LIFE programme – will help deliver a major conservation project to explore how to re-establish the natural movement within dunes and create the conditions that some of our rarest wildlife relies upon.

Healthy sand dunes with moving sand are a sanctuary for endangered plants and animals like the natterjack toad, dune gentian and sand lizard. However these habitats are currently being smothered and fixed by a tide of invasive non-native plants turning it into scrubland. Sand dunes are now one of the most at risk habitats in Europe. Only 20,000 hectares remain across England and Wales – an area around half the size of the Isle of Wight.

The DuneLIFE project will help Natural England improve the condition of key sand dune sites in Lincolnshire, Dorset, Cornwall, Devon, Merseyside and Cumbria by tackling the root causes of decline. The scheme will:

- Deliver a programme of removal of invasive species to rebalance the natural processes of dune colonisation
- Restore sand dunes and dune slacks
- Create bare sand patches by turf stripping and sand scraping
- Encourage more people to access and enjoy dunes and take part in their conservation

Natural England are working in partnership with Plantlife, National Trust and the Wildlife Trusts to deliver this ambitious and innovative project.

Chairman of Natural England, Andrew Sells, said:

This is a wonderful project to help save our sand dunes and promote a better understanding of this fascinating landscape.

Sand dunes are a familiar backdrop to a day at the beach, but few people realise the serious threat they face across Europe. I am delighted that we have this exciting opportunity to work with our partners to safeguard these wildlife-rich habitats for future generations.

Marian Spain, Plantlife Chief Executive, said:

Nestling often undetected in the dunes are a treasure chest of wildflowers and wealth of wildlife jewels.

Re-enlivening sand dunes – much of them now suffocated under a blanket of thick grass and scrub – is urgent if we are to save dune flowers such as the plucky little fen orchid from extinction. Purple milk-vetch and dune gentian, two other rare dune gems, face an increasingly uncertain future without the help of this exciting project. And the really great news is that everybody who visits the dunes can make a difference: we know now that trampling feet is a great way to free up space for rare plants.

While millions either live in coastal communities or visit the seaside every year it is sadly little-known that dunes are listed as the habitat most at risk in Europe. This project can transform their future by inspiring and promoting a better understanding of their value to wildflowers, wildlife and people.

David Bullock, Head of Nature Conservation at the National Trust, said:

Sand dunes are amongst the most threatened landscapes in Europe because we have sought to stabilise them and also they have been invaded by non-native vegetation.

The windblown sand spaces that the special animals and plants need to survive are no longer there.

This project will create new open blown patches of sand and we hope not to just connect nature with nature; but people with nature and sand dunes as well.

Stephanie Hilborne OBE, CEO of The Wildlife Trusts, said:

Everyone should have the opportunity to experience the joy of standing amidst a sand dune. These are wild places and when you stand amongst the marram grass and sea holly, listening to the sound of the surf and the call of the stonechats you may look up to see a raven wheeling above.

Our sand dunes don't just provide wildlife with a home, and us with such experiences but they act as a natural flood defence. So this partnership is an exciting new development given that so many of our dunes are in trouble.

We are looking forward to helping people breathe new life in to our dunes from Cumbria to Cornwall and across to Lincolnshire. Thanks to funding from the EU LIFE programme there is a great chance to help many people work together to change the natural world for the better.

This successful LIFE bid marks an important step towards a larger programme of sand dune conservation work around the coast of England and Wales which has already gained initial support for over £4 million of National Lottery funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Natural England are working in partnership with Natural Resources Wales, Plantlife, National Trust, and The Wildlife Trusts, to deliver this ambitious project.

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[News story: Independent chemical weapons experts invited to the UK to continue assistance with Amesbury case](#)

The UK has invited independent technical experts from the international chemical weapons watchdog to travel to the UK to collect further samples.

The experts, from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), will return to the UK to continue their work to independently confirm the identity of the nerve agent, which resulted in the death of one British national in Amesbury, and left another seriously ill.

The UK Deputy Permanent Representative to the OPCW has written to the Organisation's Director General, inviting them to assist the work already taking place – in accordance with Article VIII 38 (e) of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

During their visit, the OPCW's experts will collect more samples to inform their work following their visit in July.

The samples will be analysed at highly reputable international laboratories designated by the OPCW.

The use of chemical weapons is unacceptable and contravenes international law. The UK remains committed to upholding the integrity of the OPCW as the implementing body for the Chemical Weapons Convention overseeing the global ban on their use.

Further information