

Record amount of heroin seized in the UK that was bound for Antwerp

Nearly 1.3 tonnes of the class A drug were recovered from a container ship, the MV Gibraltar, after it docked at the port of Felixstowe on 30 August.

National Crime Agency intelligence had ascertained that the heroin would be on the vessel when it docked in the UK en route to Antwerp.

The record haul would be worth around £27 million to organised criminals at wholesale, and in excess of £120 million at street level, where it is typically supplied via county lines dealing.

The ship arrived on 30th August, and was searched by officers from Border Force and the NCA. They found a total of 1,297kg of the substance concealed among a cover load of towels and bathrobes.

After officers removed the drugs, they returned the container to the vessel, which continued on to Antwerp and docked in the Belgian port city on 1 September.

Under surveillance by Dutch and Belgian law enforcement agencies, the container was driven by lorry to a warehouse in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Upon arrival, officers moved in and arrested four people who were in the process of unloading the consignment.

The 1.3 tonne haul follows the seizure of 398 kilograms of heroin from a vessel at Felixstowe port on 2 August.

UK Ambassador in Belgium, Martin Shearman, said:

This is vivid proof of how much law enforcement between the UK, Belgium and The Netherlands matters to us all.

NCA Deputy Director, Investigations, Matt Horne, said:

This is a record heroin seizure in the UK and one of the largest ever in Europe. It will have denied organised crime tens of millions of pounds in profits, and is the result of a targeted, intelligence-led investigation, carried out by the NCA with international and UK partners.

The size of this and other recent shipments demonstrate the scale of the threat we face. We can be certain that some of these drugs would eventually have been sold in the UK, fuelling high levels of violence and exploitation including what we see in county lines offending nationwide.

The heroin trade also feeds addictions that put users' lives at risk, while giving rise to crime such as theft which make people feel unsafe in their homes and communities.

NCA officers on the front line lead the fight against the serious and organised criminals who chase profits while dominating and intimidating communities. However, reducing UK demand for illegal commodities such as heroin requires a systematic response across multiple sectors, including health and social care, prisons and education.

Council homes to form part of Homes England's first neighbourhood at Northstowe

Homes England, the government's housing agency, together with developer Urban Splash has chosen South Cambridgeshire District Council to provide 81 affordable rent properties at its first neighbourhood in the town.

All of the homes will be built using MMC (Modern Methods of Construction). MMC involves building products and methods which require prefabrication and off-site assembly, with the aim of producing better quality, more energy efficient homes in less time than traditional building methods.

The council will work with Urban Splash to deliver the project, which will include 60 homes specially designed for residents over 55.

All 81 homes will be either one or two bed and available at affordable rent. The apartments will form part of a 406 home site Urban Splash are delivering at Northstowe.

The development, located around six miles from Cambridge, will be one of the largest MMC sites in the country, with all the homes being constructed off-site at Urban Splash's factory in Alfreton, Derbyshire.

The announcement strengthens Homes England's commitment to MMC as a means of increasing building productivity.

Paul Kitson, Director for Markets, Partners and Place at Homes England said:

We support the ambition of local authorities to address housing challenges and make sure more homes are built, more quickly, in the areas where they're needed most.

South Cambridgeshire District Council has an in-depth understanding of local housing demands – appointing them as our affordable homes provider will ensure Northstowe becomes a community that meets the needs of all its residents.

The choice of MMC homes for our first neighbourhood at the new town will greatly increase the pace of delivery and offer residents greater energy efficiency.

Cllr Hazel Smith, South Cambridgeshire District Council's Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, said:

We are really excited to have succeeded in our bid to deliver these much-needed homes, increasing our overall Council House portfolio. Importantly, working with Homes England and Urban Splash on what is our first large-scale MMC project enables us to offer residents cutting-edge, designer Council homes that will actively tackle the risk of fuel poverty, making them truly affordable for people to live in.

With 60 of the new homes catering to the over 55s we want to work with Urban Splash to develop an exemplar scheme that promotes active lifestyles, supporting residents to live safely and independently for as long as possible. This work will build on our existing community development projects in Northstowe and will support intergenerational relationships across the community. Essentially, all of the 81 new homes will be better for our residents and communities, as well as for the planet.

Nathan Cornish, director at Urban Splash added:

It is our ambition to make modular housing more widely available and accessible to a range of occupiers; we are delighted therefore be working with our long term partners Homes England, as well as our new partners at South Cambridgeshire District Council – to make this happen in at Northstowe.

These homes form part of our wider plans to bring more than 400 interesting and pioneering homes to Cambridge.

Homes England is leading a long-term project to deliver 8,500 new homes in the centre of Northstowe new town by 2040.

It's anticipated that work will begin on the 406 Urban Splash homes in spring 2020.

For more information contact the Homes England press office at media@homesengland.gov.uk or call 0207 874 8262.

[The British Ambassador meets with representatives of UK Nationals during his first week in office](#)

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[Exeter fish pass extended 7m after weir washes away](#)



The 7.3m extension to the Trews Weir fish pass is bolted into place

Fish in the River Exe can swim easier upstream now a fish pass has temporarily been extended.

Except during times of heavy flow, salmon and trout have been unable to get beyond Trews Weir in Exeter after the water level dropped more than a metre when part of nearby St James' Weir washed away.

The large presence of salmon makes the River Exe one of the most valuable rivers in Devon and Cornwall. Salmon use the river to travel to and from their breeding ground in the heart of Exmoor.

[Extending the Trews Weir fish pass](#)

Ben Johnstone of the Environment Agency said:

Finding an answer to this problem has been difficult and time consuming. Extending a fish pass is not as simple as it sounds.

You have to account for water levels possibly changing again, how long the extension will be in place and the time needed to design and manufacture the final article.

The Environment Agency has allocated £470,000 to the scheme. The extension was part assembled on dry land by contractor Kier with baffles – sheets of metal shaped into waves – attached to the structure before a crane lowered it into the river.

The fish pass will be temporarily extended 7.3m so that it reconnects with the water and will remain fit for purpose for at least two years while a permanent solution is designed. As salmon are attracted to strong currents, 48 bags of rocks – each weighing four tons – have been put into the river to channel salmon along the weir to the pass.

Bags of rock, each weighing 4 tons, will channel salmon to the pass

Cameras at the top of the fish pass will collect data before and after the extension is built, to let us know if the temporary extension is helping fish.

The next step is to design an extension for the eel pass as elvers cannot ascend the weir.

The Environment Agency is looking at the long-term options for St James' Weir with Exeter City Council, which was damaged by high winter flows shortly after Christmas 2018.

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1. 12 September 2019 Video added.
 2. 9 September 2019 First published.
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Civil news: housing and debt and HPCDS tenders open

We are inviting organisations to submit tenders through the e-Tendering system to deliver services from 1 November 2019 for:

1. Housing and debt services in small number of geographic areas
2. HPCDS services in specific courts

Providers are free to tender for either one category of work or both.

Where is this work available?

Housing and debt service contracts are being offered in:

Up to 4 HPCDS contracts are being offered in each of the following scheme areas:

- Taunton and Yeovil
- Telford

These schemes will be scheduled through rotas.

Housing and debt tender

This tender is non-competitive and is being run under the 2018 Standard Civil Contract.

It is open to both current legal aid contract holders and new entrants. All organisations assessed as being suitable and as meeting the minimum service requirements will be awarded a contract.

Contracts will be offered for an initial period up to 30 August 2021. This is subject to the LAA's rights of early termination and the right to extend.

Housing and Possession Court Duty Scheme tender

This tender is for an exclusive schedule under the 2013 Standard Civil Contract (as amended) for a contingency period in specific courts. It is only open to:

- current civil legal aid providers contracted to deliver housing and debt

- organisations applying through the concurrent housing and debt tender which subsequently go on to hold a 2018 Standard Civil Contract in housing and debt

Contracts will be offered up to 30 September 2020. This is subject to the LAA's rights of early termination.

Tender deadline

The tender process to procure these contracts will close at 9am 7 October 2019.

Further information

[Civil 2018 contracts tender](#) – to find out more and download the Information For Applicants document

[e-Tendering system](#) – to submit your tender