

**Chronology of events in case of
Able UK exemption to the Asbestos (Prohibitions) Regulations**

Pre-decision actions

1. 10 April - Able UK first made informal contact with HSE.
2. 11 April - HSE put a series of questions to Able UK for them to answer should they request an exemption certificate.
3. 7 May - Able UK's e-mail application received, stating, "Discussions between Able UK, the US Environmental Protection Agency and the UK Environment Agency (EA) for the importation of the waste material are now concluded with the EA agreeing that the vessels can be transferred...to Hartlepool".
4. 20 May – Discussion with EA concerning the Transfrontier Shipment of Waste regulatory requirements. EA had had a conference call with the US State Department, their Maritime Agency and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Able UK's waste management licences allow them to undertake contracts of this, but must go through a notification and permission system not undertaken at that point.
5. 22 May – E-mail from US Office of Environmental Policy, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, U.S. Department of State asking for details of UK asbestos regulation requirements.
6. 5 June – telephone conversation with EA to discuss the UK policy on the movement of waste (the UK Plan), which states that there is a general presumption against imports for disposal in the UK. EA views Able UK contract as mainly recovery and recycling rather than disposal and so UK Plan does not apply. EA commented that they are keen for this project to go ahead, particularly given wider, global considerations and consider the company's facilities suitable.
7. 16 June – Cabinet reshuffle requires submissions to Minister delayed for 2 weeks.
8. 8 July – Ministerial submission sent.
9. 14 July – Request from the Minister to consult local MPs received.
10. 15 July – Able UK mention for the 1st time the 'weather window'.
11. 17 July – MPs e-mailed with background note for their opinions.
12. 18 July – HSE contact US Office of Environmental Policy regarding why US not undertaking work (lack of available capacity within timeframe) and where they go if not to Teesside (probably China or Mexico).
13. 25 July – responses received from Hartlepool BC and MPs (6 from 12). Mainly positive.
 - Exemption agreed.
 - HSSD sent submission informing Minister of decision.
 - Able UK notified of decision, subject to conditions still to be finalised.

Post-decision actions

14. 27 July – Critical articles appear in Observer and Mail on Sunday.
15. 28 July –John Cummings MP (Easington) telephone call registering displeasure at decision. He was contacted with other MPs but did not respond to consultation.
16. 29 July - Telephone call from Friends of the Earth.
17. 30 July – EA confirm that the notification and permission system requirements of EA’s regulations had been met by Able UK. • Note to Commissioners setting out background, factors behind the decision and lines to take.
18. 1 August - Letter received from Friends of the Earth querying decision. • A series of articles start to appear in the local press, both sides are being reported at this point.
19. 4 August - Hartlepool Council asks for views on lines to take regarding the health and safety aspects of the contract.
20. 5 August – Commission meeting. HSC expressed concerns.
21. 6 August – Independent assessment of the scientific/technical information in the case initiated including a review by HSL.
22. 7 August – Reply to Friends of the Earth sent. • Note to Commissioners drafted listing actions.
23. 8 August – General review of exemptions policy initiated.
24. 12 August - Letter from former employee received containing allegations concerning the working practices of the company.
25. 13 August - 2nd letter from Friends of the Earth received and holding reply sent. • Company reminded the ships must not come in to UK waters until the exemption is in place.
26. 14 August - HSL submit preliminary risk assessment.
27. 18 August - FOD warn Able UK conditions are likely to be stringent.
28. 19 August – HSE attends meeting with MCA and EA re ship recycling in the UK. Start of process to develop a cross-governmental policy.
29. 27 August – Reply sent to Friends of the Earth listing the factors taken into account in the decision. Copied to Able UK.
30. 2 September – received copy of ‘Letter of comfort’ from MARAD to EA (US retains ownership of vessels until decommissioning undertaken).
31. 3 September – HSE discussion with MoD Disposal Sales Agency regarding what happens to British naval ships at the end of their life.
32. 5 September – Exemption certificate with its conditions finalised and issued. Press briefing also issued. • Letters received from Friends of the Earth and Public Interest Lawyers.

33. 6 September – FOD meeting with ex-employee complainant.
34. 8 September – E-mail from Peter Goodwin, local Green Party.
35. 15 September – 4th letter received from Friends of the Earth
36. 16 September – Presentation made to Commission meeting. • Reply sent to Friends of the Earth.
37. 17 September- Replies sent to Public Interest Lawyers and Peter Goodwin.
38. 30 September – HSE informed Hartlepool Borough Council disputes Able UK's assertion that planning permission for dry dock is in place.
39. 1 October – US Court turns down application for Temporary Restraining Order to stop first ships sailing.
40. 6 October - First two ships leave US.
41. 20 October – letter from Peter Mandelson MP received by Chair.
42. 29 October – HSE attend meeting at Cabinet Office of all government departments involved with the Able UK case. EA informed meeting that they had revoked the Transfrontier Shipment permission due to the planning permission issue making the Waste Management Licence modification, which they had granted, invalid. A letter from the Environment Commissioner to Margaret Beckett and a pre-226 letter was received by DEFRA, unconnected with the planning permission dispute.
43. 31 October – Public scrutiny meeting in Hartlepool attended by HSE.
44. 4 November – Second letter received from Peter Mandelson MP by Chair.
45. 5 November – review meeting to consider Able UK Exemption. Decision not to revoke.
 - High Court decision to grant injunction against work on ships until legal questions are resolved.
46. 6 November – DEFRA press release states ships cannot be worked on but will not be turned back.
47. 12/13 November – first two ships arrive in Teesside to be stored until legal position is clarified.