

# NWIFCA Quarterly Meeting

## 12<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2014: 11:00 A.M.

**AGENDA  
ITEM NO.  
7**

### HEAD OF ENFORCEMENT REPORT ON THE FISHERIES FOR THE PERIOD 1<sup>ST</sup> AUGUST TO THE 31<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER 2014

#### **GENERAL**

The following is a summary of the main fishing activities in the District:

- South America seed mussel fishery operated from the 31<sup>st</sup> August under permits issued under derogations from Byelaws 3 and 12 on specific days, tides and times as in previous years.
- There was large amounts of static gear (pots and nets) in the water in the north of the District
- The Duddon and Heysham mussel seed fisheries continued at relatively low levels throughout the quarter
- Perch Scar was fished as determined by the TSB.
- The area Villa Skate and Ray closure on the 12<sup>th</sup> October hit the industry across the district hard and the fleet has effectively tied up since then
- Landings of Scallops and Whelks into the district having been fished from outwith it

#### **Training**

A number of training courses were done this quarter.

The final group of IFCOs completed a Conflict Resolution Course provided by Niton Ltd. This is the standard course that a number of other IFCA's use. This course has been the first stage in an internal and consultative review of officer safety due to two incidents that have happened in the last 18 months.

Officers received additional Omega training during the reporting period.

Senior officers received a 1 day training course in handling freedom of information, data protection and environmental information requests.

#### **Working with partners and cross warranting**

Further work is being conducted on the following:

Measure	Details
Information sharing Agreement with Lancashire police	This allows access to Safety Warning Markers (SWMs) on individuals to inform risk assessments
General improved links with the police	Meeting with Merseyside police have been conducted during the quarter
3 <sup>rd</sup> party unacceptable behaviour policy	Being developed internally with consultation with the officers

The IFCA received a SaBRE (Supporting Britain Reservist Employers) silver award for supporting military reservists – in respect of IFCO Brownrigg. The reception took place at HMS Eaglet Reserve unit in Liverpool.

Progress with cross warranting with the Environment Agency was delayed by other work in this quarter particularly the Morecambe Bay seed mussel fisheries. Three planned meetings with EA in the North of the District unfortunately had to be postponed and officers are seeking a further date.

The HoE is currently working on a warranting standard set of training that will be mandatory to hold the IFCO warrant.

There is currently no formal cross warranting with EA in place but IFCOs in the Dee area are mandated to assist EA and NRW with management of the Dee cockle fishery order. In order to progress cross warranting with EA across the District, NWIFCA needs to set up a formal written agreement with EA showing which officers will be cross warranted, and which of the IFCA and EA powers and duties officers will be warranted to enforce.

NWIFCA also needs to hold discussions with EA and reach agreement on how officers work together in their respective areas, how categories of offences are handled and how any resulting enforcement action is carried out.

### Prosecutions

Two prosecutions have progressed during the quarter:

The trial of a shellfisherman from North Wales for three counts of obstruction (MACAA 292 (4)) and one byelaw 3 (MACAA 155) offence relating to the Foulhaze fishery in 2013 on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of September was adjourned until the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> February. The reason for the adjournment was that the District Judge determined that the late submission of the defence arguments was not appropriate and an adjournment was necessary.

The trial of a shellfisherman from Morecambe for two counts of alleged obstruction (MACAA 292 (4)) was adjourned on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November due to the District Judge requiring a full transcript of the taped police Interview under Caution (luC). The case was adjourned until the 17<sup>th</sup> December but a possible adjournment for this date has already been raised.

### **ENFORCEMENT**

Compliance during the quarter has generally been good with the following enforcement action being conducted against the following detected offences:

- Initial breach of conditions at Heysham and then compliant – verbal warning
- Mixed size mussels – small amount for personal consumption – relayed and compliant – verbal warning
- Two individuals detected foul hooking Low Town house area by EA officers – official warning letter
- Renewal of byelaw 3 permit admin error at Heysham – verbal warning
- Netting within the Byelaw 10 Derwent box – mitigating circumstances and evidential threshold not met – official warning letter

## **FISHERY SPECIFIC**

### **South America:**

The South America mussel seed fishery ran during the reporting period with three of the four vessels who were issued with an authorisation utilising it. A summary of the activity on South America is given below in annex 1.

The fishery was very closely monitored using a combination of the 'Solway Protector', 'Protector Gamma' and shore based Automatic Information System (AIS) monitoring.

Compliance with the required authorised boxes and timings was complete and no enforcement action was required during the fishery. In summary:

- Of the 276 tides that were authorised for the 4 boats a total of 32 were fished
- 10 days saw activity
- A total of 1200tonnes were removed

### **Perch Scar**

As agreed at the TSB on the 15<sup>th</sup> August the hand gathering sector was offered the opportunity to utilise the seed mussel bed on Perch scar for a week of tides. The fishery was opened between the 22<sup>nd</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> October for hand gathering but was not utilised. Communications with the industry were done through text message, the website and direct liaison between the industry and IFCOs.

Following the conclusion of the hand-working opportunity, dredging of Perch Scar was permitted in November as set out in the Science report

### **Byelaw 3 returns:**

Following initial compliance being good on the returns being introduced in August compliance slipped significantly into October and November returns. A total of 40 advisory letters (not in this quarter's reporting period) were sent on the 17<sup>th</sup> November as the first stage of sanction to attain compliance. In summary:

- The returns for fishing effort that has occurred are good
- Compliance with nil returns is poor but presents less of a risk to the management of the fishery

**Head of Enforcement**  
**28<sup>th</sup> November 2014**

**South America Activity Summary**

Date	a.m. tide	p.m. tide
<b>31<sup>st</sup> Aug – 6<sup>th</sup> Sept</b>		
31 <sup>st</sup> Aug	All three vessels fished	All three vessels fished
1 <sup>st</sup> Sept	All three vessels fished	All three vessels fished
2 <sup>nd</sup> Sept	Two vessels fished	Two vessels fished
<b>16<sup>th</sup> Sept- 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept</b>		
16 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Three vessels fished	No activity
<b>30<sup>th</sup> Sept – 5<sup>th</sup> Oct</b>		
1 <sup>st</sup> Oct	Two vessels fished	Two vessels fished
<b>14<sup>th</sup> Oct – 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct</b>		
15 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Two vessels fished	One vessel fished
<b>29<sup>th</sup> Oct – 4<sup>th</sup> Nov</b>		
29 <sup>th</sup> Oct	One vessel fished	One vessel fished
30 <sup>th</sup> Oct	One vessel fished	No activity
<b>12<sup>th</sup> Nov – 21<sup>st</sup> Nov</b>		
16 <sup>th</sup> Sept	One vessel fished	One vessel fished
17 <sup>th</sup> Sept	One vessel fished	No activity

**Master of the “Solway Protector” - H Thinnesen**

**“SOLWAY PROTECTOR”**

**PATROLS, BOARDINGS AND INSPECTIONS**

Boardings and inspections from both “Solway Protector” and “Protector Bravo” along with two joint patrols with the Environment Agency officers totalled 15.

A number of large illegal nets and pots were seized and removed from the fishery over the last 3 months, with a number of offences against byelaws being detected. Investigations are ongoing. One of the nets seized, had been abandoned and left to ghost fish. Around 250kg of dead and rotting fish were caught up within the net. This had to be extracted and taken to landfill at a cost of approximately £200 to the Authority.

Officers along with Environment Agency staff cleaned out the nets back on land and disposed of the rotting fish at the Lillyhall waste disposal site.

Periods of poor weather and vessel servicing has limited patrol work this quarter.

**SURVEYS**

Although we have not carried out any surveys this quarter from the patrol boat, work on installing and testing new equipment remains ongoing.

We have been approached by an environmental consultant company to carry out certain survey work in 2015. From the brief discussion I had with the company the work would involve 2 days beam trawling per month over a 12 month period, along with some seabed sampling using day grab equipment. Unfortunately the day grab work we will be unable to do as the lifting davit on the patrol boat to carry out this type of work was condemned quite some time ago.

**WEATHER**

The first two weeks of the quarter the weather was mostly settled with light south to southeast winds. However the last two weeks of August was a different story with strong to gale-force conditions being mainly southwest through to northwest. September gave us the best conditions for the quarter as weather remained mainly settled with a number of very calm and sunny days. The rest of the reporting period has been mainly poor with gales at times from all directions of the compass

**Servicing**

The “Solway Protector” has undergone the following technical problems and repairs:

- On the 2<sup>nd</sup> September while preparing for an early morning fishery patrol, the starboard main engine failed to start. Officers traced the fault back to the fuel pump, and once this was removed it was noticed that the drive gear on the pump was adrift, and the securing bolt was missing. The engine had to be removed in order to retrieve it from the crank case.
- The engine was taken out of the patrol boat on the 15<sup>th</sup> September 2014. As Members will appreciate, this is a very time consuming and extremely labour intensive job and as a result the patrol boat remained offline for a number of weeks over the quarter. All of the above work was carried out by the Authority’s patrol boat crew.

- On the 29<sup>th</sup> October while out on a routine fishery patrol, the starboard main engine gearbox lost oil pressure. Upon inspection, it was found that the main oil pressure hose on the gearbox had fractured and had lost all the oil. The vessel returned back to port on one engine. A new hose supplied by local firm Yarl Hydracentre was fitted by patrol boat crew.
- The 1.5 tonne deck crane had most of its hydraulic rubber hoses replaced during the quarter. These were very heavily corroded due to the salt water environment it operates in. New replacement hoses were again supplied by Yarl Hydracentre.
- We also took the opportunity while waiting on engine parts and poor weather days, to clean and paint both port and starboard main engines and repaint some areas of the engine room which had been damaged due to the engines being removed on a number of occasions over the last 24 months.

All oil changes and planned maintenance schedules are up to date

### **“PROTECTOR BRAVO” – 7 metre Osprey Viper - RIB**

“Protector Bravo” continues to remain an important enforcement tool for inshore enforcement and science officers.

Maintenance carried out on the 7m RIB during the quarter is as follows:

- Bilge pump and associated wiring replaced
- Corroded wiring under console replaced
- New batteries fitted
- Hydraulic hoses to the net/pot hauler replaced
- New deck lights fitted

During the reporting period “Protector Bravo” along with “Protector Gamma” had their annual inspection for the MCA coding.

**H THINNESEN**

Master “Solway Protector”

14<sup>th</sup> November 2014

**" Solway Protector "****DURATION OF PATROLS AND SIGHTINGS**

Date	Area Patrolled	Sightings	Sea time	
			Hrs.	Mins.
05/08/2014	Whitehaven to Heysham	12	10	30
06/08/2014	W of Whitehaven/Eskmeals	7	3	45
08/08/2014	W of St Bees/Workington/Silloth	13	8	0
27/08/2014	W to Caulderton/Workington/Silloth	22	6	30
31/08/2014	Whitehaven south to Barrow	4	12	45
01/09/2014	Barrow - South American Mussel Skear	3	14	30
29/10/2014	Whitehaven - north	2	1	50

**" Solway Protector "****PATROL STATISTICS**

	<b>1/8/2014 - 31/10/2014</b>		<b>1/5/2014 - 31/7/2014</b>	
Number of patrols and passages	7	patrols	25	patrols
Seatime	57 hrs	50 mins	159 hrs	0 mins
Average length of patrol	8 hrs	15 mins	6 hrs	22 mins
Total distance covered	414	miles	1270	miles
Average distance per patrol	59	miles	51	miles
Fuel used	880	gallons	3075	gallons
Average fuel used per patrol	126	gallons	123	gallons
<b><u>Total identified sightings:</u></b>	63	vessels	220	vessels
Local	57	vessels	130	vessels
Visiting	6	vessels	90	vessels
<b><u>Types of fishing vessels sighted:</u></b>	<b><u>&lt; 45'</u></b>	<b><u>&gt; 45'</u></b>	<b><u>&lt; 45'</u></b>	<b><u>&gt; 45'</u></b>
Trawlers	18	3	121	9
Beam Trawlers	0	0	0	0
Twin Rig Trawlers	0	1	0	49
Pair Trawlers	0	0	0	0
Anchor Seiners	0	0	0	0
Fly Draggers	0	0	0	0
Gill Netters	3	0	4	0
Shrimpers	5	0	0	0
Twin Beam Shrimpers	0	0	0	0
Whelk Potters	0	0	0	1
Potting Boats	13	0	8	0
Scallop Dredgers	0	0	0	2
Mussel Dredgers	1	6	0	0
Cockle Dredgers	0	0	0	0
Netters	0	0	1	0
Anglers	13	0	25	0
<b><u>Total:</u></b>	53	10	159	61



**GENERAL**

This reporting period covers various shore based activities from all sectors of the fishing community, as follows:

- The usual ports and landing sites were checked on a regular basis and the recreational angling activity pace has slowed down due to a poor season with disappointing mackerel landings from all of the anglers throughout Cumbria. Some bass were being caught through August, September and into October, and the second half of October saw an increase in codlings being caught along with the usual dogs, whiting and plaice.
- The prawn trawlers for first two months of the quarter encountered some favourable weather conditions, which in turn provided the boats with a good run of fishing opportunities, mostly at night. By October with the weather breaking not much fishing time was available and most of the Maryport fleet and some of the Whitehaven fleet have changed over to scallop dredging and will take part in the Isle of Man scallop fishery which opens on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November.
- The shrimpers and potters have been active and making good use of the fair weather we have experienced during the quarter, and in the latter part of September and into October they saw better landings of shrimp with up to 100-150 kilos being reported for a tide, although weather restricted their fishing opportunities.
- All beach netters have complied with the old CSFC legacy byelaw no: 10.

The mussel spat settlement this year has grown on through the quarter, and providing the winter storms don't wash the spat away, there could potentially be a viable fishery by the end of 2015 towards mid-2016.

A small cockle survey was carried out on board a Silloth based suction dredger "Jolanda" CL4: this took place on the Middle Bank and Beckfoot Flats.

Four people were cautioned during the quarter, two for foul hooking fish in the Solway near to Burghmarsh point; one skipper was given a caution for an undersized lobster, and another skipper was cautioned for a Byelaw 10 offence. A large number of dead and decaying fish were seen by officers at Parton slipway in October. The dead fish were also found on board a small fishing vessel in the Parton compound. This was a large amount of marketable sized fish, bass and codling which was left to die and decay. Although there was no evidence of any byelaws been breached, officers were concerned that public health was at risk and notified the local council health and hygiene department which served a notice to the owner of the vessel to clean and take away dead and decaying fish species.

All in all a good quarter was had for both the local and visiting vessels alike, but with weather conditions worsening during the latter part of the quarter, we have seen less activity from the trawling fleet.

**TRAWLING**

From the beginning of August and up to mid-September we have seen some busy periods of fishing due to the weather conditions being favourable. Vessels targeting prawns (nephrops) fished through the night as well as the daytime later on in the quarter. At the beginning of the quarter inspections at ports revealed some moderate to good landings of around 20 - 50 stones of prawn and very little fish. In August and early September vessels made some good hauls of

prawns (nephrops), and in the latter part of the quarter a drop was seen in fishing opportunities due to the poor weather conditions and a drop in quantity of prawns.

### **SHRIMP VESSELS – SILLOTH**

Reports throughout the quarter relate to mixed landings of shrimps from 50 - 150 kg for one tide. Prices for shrimp have been stable for most of the period under review, whilst fishing was poor for the shrimpers at the start of the quarter, the latter part saw fishing picking up for the locally based vessels.

### **POTTING**

Potting for lobster, brown crab and whelks have seen busy periods throughout the quarter, with smaller vessels working further north off St Bees Head, Whitehaven, Workington and Maryport. Reports have been made of various sized catches from 7 single lobsters and brown crabs to 25 kg of each lobster and crabs. Prices over the quarter for lobster averaged out at £6 - £7 per kg. Inspections throughout the quarter have seen no breach of national legislation or our local byelaws.

The large whelk vessel “Fleur-de-France” J86 has made numerous landings into Whitehaven with 3 day trips yielding an average of 10 tonnes of whelks, at an approximate cost of £650.00 per tonne. This vessel has been consistent with its landings of whelks, none of which have been caught inside the district, with all catches being from Scottish waters in the Solway Firth and areas around Mull of Galloway.

Regular landings have been made from the hobby fishermen (permitted potting vessels) who fish 5 pots and are allowed to retain 1 lobster, 5 brown crabs or 10 kgs of whelks per day. Reports from most skippers are that more undersized and berried lobsters were being caught in pots and returned to the sea. Regular inspections of vessels at the usual landing stations were made throughout the period with legislation being rigorously enforced.

By mid-September into October saw a fall in landings of lobster and brown crab which is the norm for this time of year, and most of the potters by end of the quarter had brought their pots in for the winter, although some vessels have kept their pots out and intend to fish them through the winter.

### **OFFSHORE NETTING**

Reports from this sector is patchy, as some areas are seeing good numbers of thorn backed rays, and others are lucky to see any fish at all. Most of the rays have been caught north and west of Workington. By mid-October fishing for bass was taking place by vessels drift netting close inshore, and on a couple of occasions officers were called out at weekends with reports of nets been set close to shore and would have been in breach of Byelaw 10 deep water fishery, but inspections revealed these vessels were in fact engaged in drift netting which is legal at this time of year, except the four boxed areas.

### **BEACH NETTING**

No nets were seen throughout the quarter due to the Byelaw 10 shallow netting ban at this time of year.

### **ANGLING**

Throughout the period, over 270 anglers were seen with half of them being inspected, some of whom were catching up to 3 mackerel per tide. Most of the anglers have reported a lack of mackerel being caught this season. Some dabs and the odd plaice and codling have been taken. At other stations some dabs, small codlings and the odd bass were also being caught. It is noticeable that bass have started to be caught in greater numbers from the beaches, as one report was of a angler having caught 20 bass in one tide fishing. There were no infringements of

undersized bass being caught this quarter as most of the anglers are from angling clubs who have a voluntary minimum landing size (MLS) of 42 cm which is greater than the national MLS of 36cm.

### **BAIT DIGGING**

Bait digging throughout the district has seen over 56 diggers operating, some of which were collecting for their own use, others were commercial diggers with 100 - 700 worms per tide being taken at times. Commercial prices are believed to be in the region of £30 - £35 for 100 worms.

### **BAIT CRABBERS**

Gatherers have been seen north of Maryport fishing for shore crabs, where 5 of which have been inspected. No brown crab has been seen in the buckets, however concerns have been voiced again from local crabbers about the amount of visitors coming and taking every crab they find.

### **Officer Statistics for the period 1<sup>st</sup> August – 31<sup>st</sup> October 2014**

Shore Patrols	50
Fishing Locations visited	527
Quad Patrols	10
Locations by quad	62
Anglers seen	273
Bait Diggers and crabbers seen	60
Shellfish gatherers (Winkle Pickers	8
Sightings/closings/inspections/boarding's	7038
Beach nets inspected	0
Days assisting other areas of district	1
Long lines inspected	11

### **NORTH MORECAMBE BAY**

### **HAVERIGG POINT TO ARNSIDE**

**IFCO, I. DIXON**

### **GENERAL**

The majority of this reporting period has again been spent monitoring the various mussel fisheries which have been operating on the North Morecambe Bay area, both by hand gatherers and mussel dredgers.

In early August 2 Byelaw 3 permit holders were found guilty of gathering undersize mussels from the Foulney/Roosebeck area and fined over £300 each.

### **TRAWLING**

During the last quarter I have not observed or had any reports of commercial trawling activity. The trawler 'My Lads' returned to Barrow during the quarter for maintenance work but did not fish during the time spent in Barrow.

### **SHRIMPING**

Shrimp fishing activity continued at a very low level during the early part of this quarter, due to the lack of shrimps in the traditional areas in Morecambe Bay. It wasn't until mid September that activity increased and moderate catches of shrimps were reported and observed, allowing fishermen to begin to fulfil orders. Several Shrimp fishermen from Flookburgh decided to prospect for shrimps elsewhere in the District and further afield. Nine tractor and tra-la-la trailers have been observed working from Flookburgh and one tractor and tra-la-la working from Baycliff when

conditions were favourable, occasionally one tractor has been observed working from Newbiggin but the popular area known as the Mussel Hollow has largely sanded up.

One small vessel is occasionally observed trawling for shrimps in the Duddon channel in the Askam-in-Furness area.

### **COCKLES**

During the last quarter I have received no reports of commercial cockling activity on the North Morecambe Bay area. Regular patrols both at night and during the daytime have not identified any illegal cockling activity either.

I observed one family group gathering cockles in the Roosebeck area but they relayed all the cockles they had gathered once I explained to them that the area was still closed to cockling.

I continue to take Food Hygiene samples from Flookburgh, Leven Island, Newbiggin and Aldingham cockle beds for South Lakeland District Council

### **MUSSELS**

During this quarter the majority of my time has been spent monitoring mussel gathering activity on the mussel bed known as Hard Acre in the outer Duddon Estuary. Up to 30 permitted gatherers have worked the area on periods of spring tides, during the early part of the quarter. Effort reduced once Heysham seed mussel fishery opened and gatherers local to that area generally worked there instead of travelling to the Duddon, unless more lucrative orders were on offer. Later in the quarter the mussel bed on Hard Acre began to sand up in places and the periods of heavy rainfall changed the course of the channel and covered a large part of the mussel bed. Following this only a small number of gatherers have been observed fulfilling small orders, which I believe might only continue into November before the area becomes uneconomic to continue working. Foulney mussel bed was surveyed by IFCA officers and found to still hold a large amount of seed mussel, reports from prospecting mussel gatherers suggest that many of the large mussels on Foulney were found to contain pearls and also have a very poor meat content.

During the quarter 3 mussel dredgers have been fishing for seed mussel under authorisation in the area known as South America to the east of Foulney. Reports and inspections showed that fishing has been poor this year due to a lack of seed mussel; this follows two exceptional years of seed mussel stock. Industry demand has seen the original area extended twice although reports still suggest very little stock was removed; this was not helped by poor weather conditions.

I continue to take mussel samples from Foulney for Barrow Borough Council. I have been taking mussel samples fortnightly from the Duddon mussel bed since it achieved classification.

### **NETTING**

Netting activity, both from boats and beach nets, increased during the last quarter as the numbers of Bass increased and the numbers of jellyfish which were causing problems to the netting activities decreased. Catches of Bass from the drift netting boats from Morecambe Bay and the west of Walney were moderate at best, one haul of sixty stones was heard of, but this was the exception, inspections at Walney slipway indicated that two boxes was a decent haul and many times very few Bass were caught. On the whole the average size of Bass was larger than last year and inspections backed this fact with no undersize seen and the average was well over 40cm. Fishermen still reported very few mullet being caught.

Several beach nets were checked in the Leven estuary, Roosebeck area and on the west of Walney, the nets in the Leven predominantly caught Flounders, with occasional Bass. Nets set near Roosebeck recorded some good numbers of Bass and Plaice but not on a regular basis.

Flue nets were observed being fished according to the byelaws in the Leven estuary but catches consisted of mainly Flounders with one or two Bass and an occasional Mullet.

## **ANGLING**

Angling continues to be popular in the Walney area, along the coast road and at Greenodd.

Good catches of Codling were reported from Walney Channel. Boat anglers were observed and inspected in increasing numbers during the quarter as better weather and Bass numbers increased. Inspections and reports suggest that Bass numbers are not as high as last year but the size of the Bass tends to be larger. Concerns were raised over the lack of mackerel numbers.

## **POTTING**

One licensed potting vessel from Barrow worked up to 300 pots regularly throughout the last quarter, until late October when they began to bring in the gear for the winter. The skipper described the season as being generally poor, with catches below average. A new licensed potting vessel began operating from Barrow during the quarter although it was fishing outside of the NWIFCA District. One other licensed potting vessel continued to work several strings of pots in the Irish Sea area in front of Walney with moderate success.

All inspections of the potting vessels and their respective gear have been met with an encouraging compliance with IFCA Byelaws.

On exceptional spring tides I received reports from a lobster fisherman who was concerned that people were walking out to rocky marks at low water and catching lobsters and edible crabs. I conducted several patrols and spoke to a few members of the public who were involved in this activity, all lobsters and edible crabs seen were within IFCA Byelaw limits under byelaw 30 and I handed out information leaflets to make them aware of the restrictions under the byelaws.

## **OTHER ACTIVITIES**

During this quarter I have continued to undertake export checks on behalf of Cefas for oyster seed exports from Walney hatchery.

## **SOUTH MORECAMBE BAY**

## **ARNSIDE TO KNOTT END**

## **SENIOR IFCO, S. J. WAITE**

## **TRAWLING**

This fishery continues to be extremely low key. I have continued to see no improvement in activity taking place either on a commercial or hobby basis. This fishery continues to prove very disappointing and, as reported in previous reports, no improvement is expected in the foreseeable future.

## **SHRIMPS**

Effort in the inshore shrimp fishery throughout the last quarter remains disappointing. Fishermen associated with the commercial inshore fishery have worked throughout the last period, with one full time fisherman working both tides. Shrimp effort in the inshore fishery has proved very difficult with fishermen complaining about the amount of small shrimps being landed.

The commercial inshore fishery remains very disappointing with only two fishermen working on a regular basis.

During this last quarter I have observed only occasional effort taking place from part time fisherman working their inshore shrimp boats on a hobby basis. In addition, I have continued to observe no activity by fishermen working tractor and tra la la units on the south side of Morecambe Bay. I have observed no activity from fishermen using push nets throughout my area.

### **COCKLES**

Throughout this last quarter I have received no reports of cockles being removed by either commercial gatherers or from members of the public removing cockles for private consumption. This is due to the almost non-existence of both mature and under size cockles throughout my area.

During this last quarter, I have seen no improvement in stocks of either mature or immature cockles as mentioned in previous reports and I see no improvement in this fishery in the foreseeable future. All beds in my area remain closed.

### **MUSSELS**

During this last quarter I have observed and received no reports of mature mussels being gathered from any of the recognised skears in my area.

All skears have been checked within this last quarter and although mature mussel stocks have continued to be extremely low, all recognised beds had a good settlement of seed mussel on all skears on the south side of Morecambe Bay.

During this last quarter Heysham Flat opened for the removal of seed mussel as has been the practice in previous years.

Effort in this fishery has been fairly consistent with around 15 gatherers working available day light tides. Most effort in this fishery has been by gatherers working for one buyer with the occasional increase in effort by gatherers removing seed mussel to honour small orders. Landings have been around 12 tons per day although mussels landed have started to decrease this being due to storm damage and the continued effort taking place on the Skear.

During this last quarter I have checked the Battery area on almost every occasion gathering has taken place and I will continue to monitor the area throughout the next quarter.

During this last quarter I have continued to collect shellfish for Wyre District Council.

### **DRIFT STAKE AND SET NETS**

Effort in the inshore drift net fishery remains low key with fishermen associated with the inshore drift net fishery choosing to work other licenced fisheries. Unfortunately, the new drift net boat mentioned in my last report sank on her moorings due to heavy storms with other inshore drift net boats being removed before the forecasted storms. As a result few boats returned to their moorings. October saw all but one inshore drift net boat removed from the fishery although I expect her to be removed shortly.

Unfortunately, as mentioned in previous reports, this fishery's future is mainly moving towards a part time basis.

Whitebait nets set in the Lune Estuary have again been fished after the seasonal closure. Excellent landings of whitebait and sprats were reported on selected tides; landings going for human consumption and to Blackpool Zoo for feed.

Stake and set nets have again been fished although effort remains low key. During this last quarter nets have been fished towards the top of Morecambe Bay, Heysham and Pilling Sands.

During this last quarter I have observed little activity from anglers setting lines although effort improved towards the end of the quarter.

### **DINGHY AND SHORE ANGLING**

During this last quarter effort from dinghy anglers improved over the last period with reasonable landings of Bass, Codling and Plaice during the first half of the quarter and, throughout the period, Plaice and Thornback Rays.

During this last quarter shore anglers have continued to fish over high and low water tides at the top end of Morecambe Bay, the Stone Jetty at Morecambe, Heysham North Wall, Heysham and Knott End. Fishermen have reported good landings of Plaice, throughout the last quarter with reasonable landing of Bass and Codling during the first half of the quarter.

As reported in previous reports, both dinghy and shore anglers have continued to be plagued by Dog Fish.

### **CENTRAL AREA**

### **RIVER WYRE TO RIVER ALT**

**SENIOR IFCO, S. Brown**

### **GENERAL**

After what seemed to be an eternal period of easterly and northerly winds September and October brought westerly's a plenty in the form of the tail end of two hurricanes. The resultant stirring up seems to have done the coastal fisheries a power of good with better reports coming in from most sectors of the fishery.

Work has begun on the long awaited repairs to the Rossall sea defences; work is scheduled for the next three years. While nobody disputes the necessity for these repairs I have received a considerable number of verbal complaints from both anglers and shrimpers who are having considerable difficulty accessing the Rossall fisheries due to the closure of a significant length of the sea wall to the public.

### **TRAWLING**

The area's remaining inshore trawlers have fished steadily landing catches of plaice, flounder, thornback ray and a few sole. Fish prices always seem to be poor and the fishermen report that their overheads not surprisingly continue to grow.

Most fishing activity has taken place in Lune Deep, below Shell Wharf out to the Point of the Bank and on and around Shell Flat Bank.

The news of the area VII Skates and Ray closure has hit local men hard. Overfishing in other areas has without doubt inflicted hardship on those who have managed their own quota resources more responsibly. Thornback Ray is abundant locally and provides a substantial part of the Fleetwood boats earnings. It remains to be seen how this significant setback will affect the long term viability of the local fleet. Hopefully some resolution can be found to this issue.

### **SHRIMPING**

After the traditionally quiet summer period the winds eventually came around to the west (perhaps a bit too much wind at times) and the shrimp fishery began to improve. The Southport and Marshside tractor fishermen have reported good catches from Formby up to the Penfold Channel. This has given a welcome boost to earnings that have been very poor over the last few years.

One boat remains full time shrimping at Lytham. Along the Fylde Coast push netters have taken modest catches. With access to the popular Rossall fisheries made difficult by the sea defence works push netters have been seen shrimping at other locations such as Rossall Beach (very stony) and outside Perch Scar on the R Wyre.

### **COCKLES AND MUSSELS**

Lytham fishermen travelled to work both the Heysham seed mussel fishery and the Duddon mussel fishery before returning to harvest the Ribble Walls later in the reporting period. Modest landings have been made to meet the demands of small orders.

At the time of writing there has been no interest in the Perch Scar seed mussel fishery, it is probable that while this small fishery has been opened and holds a modest stock working the much larger Heysham Flat seed mussel fishery has clearly been a more viable option.

I know of no significant cockle spatfall between the Alt and the Wyre this year, very low levels of cockle spat have been seen about the Ribble but the recovery of stocks to commercial quantities seems a distant prospect. Stocks of mature cockles are so low that MSH sampling from the southern Ribble beds has become unviable. I recently accompanied a commercial cockle scouting party who had heard rumours of new bed's, after a considerable time spent covering the most obscure parts of the southern Ribble fishery we had found less than 20 mature specimens between the 4 of us!

### **NETS AND LINES**

The drift net boats working from Lytham have worked steadily throughout the summer months. Only modest catches of bass backed up by a few mullet and mackerel have been reported.

Set nets have been worked at opportune times along the Sefton coast from the Penfold Channel down to Formby Pt. Conditions have not been ideal with too much clear water in the early part of the quarter and an excess of wind in the latter. Again no significant catches have been reported.

From late September codling have started to show with reports of some modest catches being taken on lines along the N Fylde coast.

### **ANGLING**

Shore and boat angling has been popular throughout the summer months. Anglers have reported a veritable plague of dogfish but catches of flatfish and bass have also been taken. Catches of codling and whittings started to show in September ending many years of speculation about when the cyclical coastal cod fishery would return.

Observations suggest that the boat anglers have had the best of the fishing early on with easterly and northerly winds discouraging shore fishing. Once the wind came around conditions favoured the surf caster. During the later weeks of October the weather became more stable and the Fylde coast began to provide anglers with some respectable catches of codling and whiting.

### **WHELKS**

Up to 5 Milford Whelk potters have been working regularly from Fleetwood.

### **ENFORCEMENT**

Regular patrols have been undertaken both ashore and on intertidal areas. The ATV has covered 547 kms on patrol and sample gathering work. Routine inspections have been undertaken and with the need to issue only one verbal admonishment the standard of byelaw compliance found has been good.



**GENERAL**

During this quarter both IFC Officer Capper and I have continued to undertake activities such as enforcement, sampling and survey work throughout our area and the NWIFCA District. Officer Capper and I have also had the chance to undertake routine seaborne patrols on the River Mersey, Liverpool Bay and Dee Estuary with 'Bay Protector', the area's patrol vessel.

**SPECIFIC****COCKLES**

Wirral North cockle bed remains closed, and will continue to be throughout the remainder of 2014 and into the first quarter of next year. Beach closure notices to cockling remain in place and will do for the foreseeable future. The bed will continue to be monitored by the enforcement and science staff of NWIFCA.

**MUSSEL**

West Kirby and Caldy Blacks mussel beds remain open on the Dee Estuary but neither have very little commercial stock value. Both beds remain to be patchy and made up largely of dead shell from an inspection carried out by NWIFCA and MPHA of the area of Mussel on the river Mersey. Two points (Mersey mussel North and South) have now been nominated as Pre classification sample points, to date; several samples have been taken of which six were tested for bacterial with a further one for heavy metals. So far they have come back as B result. A further 20 samples will be taken over the next two years in order to get a grade. In the meantime all shellfish within the Mersey estuary remain classified as prohibited and are unable to be gathered.

**RAZOR CLAM**

Due to the drop in temperature and poor weather, the large scale gathering of Razor Clam along the north Wirral coastline predominantly by the oriental community has stopped and this will remain as such until April/May next year. During spring tides over the last three months it was not uncommon to see in the region of ten to one hundred orientals gathering. Several inspections were carried out with only minor catches being noted (2-5kgs); only on one occasion did I observe a gatherer with 10+kg of Razor Clam. It was interesting to note that the oriental community took more of an interest in gathering Oyster Clam. All of my observations have been passed on to the science staff and the Head of Enforcement.

**SHORE ANGLING**

Generally very little recreational angling has been observed throughout this reporting period. However, during the past few weeks a steady number of anglers have been observed along both sides of the river Mersey. Otterspool Promenade, Jobs Quay (Eastham Country Park) and 'The Wall' within the Port of Liverpool have seen between eight to twenty anglers fishing at any one time where Dab, Flounder and Cod have been observed being landed. Several inspections have taken place and no undersize has been reported. During other routine patrols New Brighton (Perch Rock and Kings Parade) again remain popular areas to the angling community. One inspection at Crosby Promenade saw one oriental netsman with five Mullet all of which were above the minimum size.

**BOAT ANGLING**

Daily sightings have observed registered and unregistered fishing vessels working in the river Mersey and Liverpool Bay area. Again weekends or times of competitions remain to be the most

popular times for boat angling. Two charter vessels from Rhyl are now based within Liverpool Marina and will fish the Cod fishery until February 2015. On one inspection of a small commercial vessel 15 Flounder and 40 Sole were inspected, it is pleasing to say that no undersize was observed.

### **NETTING**

During a routine ATV patrol four set nets were observed along the north Wirral coastline. All nets were marked up accordingly with the owner being contacted to confirm this. Routine inspections were carried out over this quarter however no catch was recorded. At present due to the bad weather all nets have been collected off the beach.

### **BAIT DIGGERS**

Bait diggers remain to be seen predominantly along the north Wirral coastline, with New Brighton, Mockbeggar Wharf and the area of beach off Leasowe Common being identified as the most popular location. Numbers indicate between 0 – 3 bait diggers have been recorded daily with anywhere between 50 – 150 worms gathered per individual.

### **BAIT COLLECTION**

Recent low water patrols have shown there to be activity with regard to bait collection utilising crab tiles/pipes which are located on the lower foreshore. Presently four areas have been identified, two along the north Wirral coastline and a further two located along the beach from Magazine to Egremont Parade within the river Mersey with one area having up to 96 crab pipes. During routine patrols it has been common to see three regular crabbers collecting from 15 to 90 peeler crabs per tide.

### **COMMERCIAL BOAT ANGLING**

Eight commercial and four recreational fishing vessels work locally out of Liverpool Marina with a further two observed moored off New Brighton. Vessels have been observed carrying between two to 10 anglers with no significant catches being noted up to this date. Good relationships continue and advice and guidance are routinely provided, along with inspection of fishing gear and equipment when requested.

### **SEA PATROLS**

Poor weather and a few minor repairs has seen 'Bay Protector' deploy to sea slightly less than expected, nevertheless, she has been active around the area. Boardings, closings and inspections have taken place on commercial charter boats and local private unregistered fishing vessels from the local area.

### **OTHER ACTIVITIES**

Daily shore patrols along the River Mersey, north Wirral coastline and both sides of the Dee Estuary continue and officer support has been offered to other areas in the form of Shore/ATV patrols and sample work. In September both officers took part in Exercise Dragon which was a live multi-agency Oil Spill Response Exercise designed to test the United Kingdom's (UK) National Contingency Plan (NCP) for Marine Pollution from Shipping and Offshore Installations. As part of our training both officers attended a Conflict Resolution Course. Joint enforcement patrols with the Marine Management Organisation have also taken place. Finally; assistance to the GLA and MPHA has remained ongoing, and will continue to do so.

During the last quarter I have predominantly been involved in the enforcement of the South America Seed Mussel Dredge fishery and the Heysham Flat Seed Mussel Hand gathering fishery. During patrols on the 'Solway Protector' and NWIFCA Ribs I saw good compliance at the South America fishery. At Heysham Flat there was also good compliance with the zoning around the *Sabellaria alveolata* reef. On spring tides fishermen prosecuted the larger seed at the bottom of the Skear.

Shore and ATV patrols have been conducted across the District, most notably on Warton and Middleton Sands, Flookburgh and Leven Island as well as Hard Acre in the Duddon Estuary. Mussel and cockle samples have been collected for shellfish hygiene testing for various local authorities.

Since the summer period I have developed a system for the storage of the data collected for Byelaw 3 shellfish returns and managed the input of returns when they are received by the office. So far returns of active fishermen have been good but returns of nil fishing effort have been poor. In November warning letters were issued for failure to send in returns. Over the past year we have developed a good working relationship with the Port policing section of Lancashire Constabulary, in November the main contact in the section left and was replaced. I have assisted with this transitional arrangement with the new member of the policing team.

More recently the Head of Enforcement and I have met with Intelligence analysts from the MMO concerning the development and storage of intelligence within NWIFCA. Since then we have received a cost neutral database which is proving vital in the development of intelligence led enforcement for the Authority.

In the last quarter within my role as Communications Officer I have published the September edition of the NWIFCA newsletter and given a presentation to students from Blackpool College on enforcement.

# **NORTH WESTERN INSHORE FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY**

## **ENFORCEMENT SUMMARY**

**1<sup>ST</sup> AUGUST TO 31<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER 2014**

### **1. ENFORCEMENT BURDEN**

1.1 Length of District coastline 878.5 n.m.

### **2. RESOURCES**

2.1 Number of patrol vessels 1 + 4 RIBs + 1 Zodiac  
2.2 Number of patrol ATVs (intertidal) 8  
2.3 Number of Fishery Officers with other duties 7 f/t, 1 p/t + 3 warranted officers

### **3. ENFORCEMENT AT SEA**

3.1 Number of patrol hours at sea 17.65  
3.2 Number of patrols at sea 8  
3.3 Number of nautical miles of patrol 188  
3.4 Number of closings 2  
3.5 Number of inspections 14  
3.6 Number of boardings 13  
3.7 Number of infringements detected 0  
3.8 Number of:-  
3.8.1 Prosecutions 0  
3.8.2 Home Office Cautions 0  
3.8.3 Prosecutions pending 0  
3.8.4 Cautions issued 0  
3.8.5 Official Warning Letter 0  
3.8.6 Advisory Warning Letter 0  
3.8.7 Verbal warnings 0

### **4. ENFORCEMENT ON LAND**

4.1 Number of inspections 1,075  
4.2 Number of ATV patrols 64  
4.3 Number of hours ATV patrols 167.36

4.4	ATV km covered	1,155.20
4.5	Number of infringements detected	7
4.6	Number of:-	
4.6.1	Prosecutions	0
4.6.2	Home Office Cautions	0
4.6.3	Prosecutions pending	3
4.6.4	Fixed Admin Penalty	0
4.6.5	Cautions issued	0
4.6.6	Official Warning Letter	3
4.6.7	Advisory Warning Letter	0
4.6.8	Verbal warnings	4

N.B. Prosecutions pending – are only counted as such after approval is given to take the case forward by the Authority. People under caution who are likely to be prosecuted may therefore not be included in this figure.