

North Western Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Quarterly Meeting: 22 March 2013

**Lake District National Park Office, Murley Moss,
Kendal: 10.30 a.m.**

**AGENDA
ITEM NO.
9**

**HEAD OF ENFORCEMENT'S REPORT ON THE FISHERIES
FOR THE PERIOD 1ST November 2012 to 31st January 2013**

WEATHER

Consistent poor weather throughout the quarter inhibited the various fishing fleets throughout the district. This had a particular effect upon the vessels that operate from ports in the north of the district.

TRAWLING

Vessels that did get to sea during the quarter saw relatively poor landings of Nephrops and Skate, although Skate landings did improve towards the end of the quarter with catches at Maryport seeing the 30-40 box mark.

SCALLOPERS

The quarter saw scallop dredgers at Maryport preparing for the opening of the Isles of Man scallop fishery on the 1st November. These vessels tend to land into Maryport and Whitehaven for logistical reasons but do not fish the district's waters.

POTTING

Poor weather and the normal seasonal reduction in the market during this quarter saw low levels of potting throughout the district. One vessel landed 10 tonnes whelks into Whitehaven.

MUSSEL AND COCKLES

Cockle beds on the south side of the Ribble remained open until mid-December during the quarter and supplied income to approximately 50 fishermen. Following the mid December closure all cockle beds within the district remained closed during the quarter, Morecambe bay and the Ribble under Byelaw 13a notices and the Solway under Cumbrian Byelaw 18. One significant incidence of illegal cockling activity was detected on the Ribble estuary, which resulted in a caution being issued and an on-going investigation. Other intelligence obtained by IFCOs indicated low levels of illegal activity in their respective districts. There is a great deal of positivity around the potential for reseeded certain Ribble cockle beds.

Mussel activity was concentrated in northern Morecambe bay with a Barrow based dredger dredging seed mussel from South America until early December. A hand gathered size mussel fishery from the Foulney bed was also operated on the appropriate tides. One investigation is on-going following the issue of a caution for a mussel fishery related offence during the quarter. A small mussel fishery remained operating from Lytham St Anne's with catches going to local processors.

The Authority clarified its position regarding the status of the Foulney bed as a public fishery with the appropriate byelaws to be enforced by the authorities IFCOs.

OTHER FISHERIES

Shrimping activity was highest in the northern part of Morecambe bay but in general activity was low during the quarter. Poor weather hampered the stake and set net fleets across the district. Angling continued at high levels during the quarter and is increasing in terms of the IFCAs enforcement priorities.

ENFORCEMENT

Compliance during the quarter was generally good, particularly with reference to the Byelaw 10 (Cumbria) seasonal prohibition of the use of fixed engines. Twenty three offences were detected during the quarter, with two serious enough to merit a caution being issued, see above.

Maritime enforcement was inhibited to a degree during the quarter due to vessels going through coding and the 'Solway Protector' commencing her annuals at Maryport from the 7th March and the general poor weather. Despite this 12 patrols were conducted with no infringements detected.

IFCOs continued to operate outside their normal areas during shore based enforcement and this flexibility is both appreciated and important.

Andrew Deary
Head of Enforcement
1st March 2013

PATROL VESSELS

Master of the “Solway Protector” - H Thinnesen

“SOLWAY PROTECTOR”

Over the quarter the “Solway Protector” has again provided us with three months of valued service with only minor running problems to report. These are as follows:

- While out on a routine patrol the “Solway Protector’s” Simrad ES 60 split beam echo sounder encountered a malfunction. Upon closer inspection it was found that the main circuit board inside the processor unit had burned out. The unit was taken away by K R Marine for repair. The patrol vessel has a back-up unit on board which has enabled us to carry out routine inshore patrols as normal.
- Minor electrical repairs were carried out on main generator control panel, also the anchor windlass power unit. These repairs were carried out by the patrol boat’s engineer

The “Solway Protector” was slipped at Maryport on the 7th of February 2013 for annual inspection and repairs. The vessel is expected to be offline for approximately four weeks in order to carry out essential repairs.

All oil changes and planned essential maintenance schedules are all up-to-date.

“PROTECTOR BRAVO” – 7 METRE OSPREY VIPER - RIB

As members will be aware “Protector Bravo” was taken out of service during the last quarter in order for the vessel to be repaired, as well as bringing her up to the MCA small workboat code of practice.

Unfortunately the vessel remains offline as the costs involved in bringing the vessel up to current standards are quite costly. We hope to have this matter resolved shortly as “Protector Bravo” forms part of our essential enforcement equipment. The vessel is used mainly for monitoring and controlling static fishing gear activities, as well as carrying out routine boardings and other essential duties.

PATROLS, BOARDINGS AND INSPECTIONS

Extended periods of poor weather along with other essential commitments has had a impact on sea time and the reduced number of patrols undertaken by the “Solway Protector” during the quarter. This apart a total of 12 patrols were carried out in the district using both “Solway Protector” and “Protector Gamma” – Humber RIB.

Sightings of fishing vessels made from both the “Solway Protector” and “Protector Gamma” totalled 67 with one being logged as a visiting vessel. A total of 29 boardings and inspections were carried out at sea using both of these vessels.

I am pleased to say that no reportable infringements or incidents were found at sea during this quarter, suggesting that compliance with byelaws and other relevant fisheries legislation has on the whole been good.

Details of patrols and sightings can as usual be found in appendices ‘A’ and ‘B’.

Surveys

The Authority's enforcement and scientific staff carried out a sublittoral mussel survey in the vicinity of the Silloth Channel at the beginning of this reporting period. However, there were no commercial quantities of mussel evident.

One beam trawl survey was carried out on the 7th January 2013 for Natural Power Consultants Amec. Once again this involved towing a small beam trawl off the stern of the "Solway Protector". Approximately 13 x 15 minute tows were undertaken out in the Solway Firth, mainly around the Robin Rigg wind farm site. Amec scientist Dr Jane Lancaster was onboard to record the data from the samples taken.

FISHING

Trawling

The trawling activity during the majority of the quarter has been poor due to bad weather and strong tides. Trawling activity only started to pick up towards the end of the quarter with reports of some good catches of skate. Plaice and prawns on the whole have been poor.

The shrimp beamers fishing out of Silloth have again continued to record poor catches.

Scalloping

As previously reported the majority of vessels from Whitehaven and Maryport had been preparing for the scallop fishery in the Isle of Man, opening. Recordings of Landings at the start of the season were seen to be positive.

Potting

As can be expected for this time of the year potting effort is reduced significantly with records of catches only being moderate to poor.

Deep Water Netting

There continues to be an increased activity by vessels from Whitehaven, Workington, and Maryport netting in the area, with relatively decent numbers of codling being reported.

Angling

Recreational boat angling continues to be popular, with some good fish marks around the coastline. There were reports of good catches of codling throughout December. Other species targeted along the Cumbrian coast include plaice, small whiting, dab, and flounder.

Boat anglers have again reported lesser spotted dog fish in large numbers throughout the district.

WEATHER

On the whole the weather has been very poor for most of the reporting period. At the beginning of the quarter the wind was mainly strong north to northwest, this pattern continued up until the second week of December when the wind direction changed round to the easterly direction again being mainly

strong to gale force at times. From the end of January up until time of writing this report the wind has settled back into a strong west to southwest direction.

H THINNESEN

Master "Solway Protector" and
Deputy Enforcement Director/IFCO (Whitehaven)
Manager of sea going operations

" Solway Protector "
DURATION OF PATROLS AND SIGHTINGS

Date	Area Patrolled	Sightings	Sea time	
			Hrs.	Mins.
01/11/2012	St Bees/Prawn Pitch/Workington	0	4	30
05/11/2012	Silloth/Maryport/Harrington	8	11	0
15/11/2012	Prawn Pitch/Selker/Haverigg/Ravenglass	1	7	0
29/11/2012	West of St Bees Head/Prawn Pitch	8	6	10
12/12/2012	West of Sellafield/Workington	7	5	15
13/12/2012	St Bees/Eskmeals/Maryport	7	5	0
18/12/2012	Prawn Pitch/North Bank	9	5	15
09/01/2013	Prawn Pitch/Lune Deep/Walney	10	11	25
10/01/2013	Robin Rigg	0	13	10
11/01/2013	Prawn Pitch/Sellafield	8	5	25
15/01/2013	Prawn Pitch/Maryport/Workington	9	6	0
17/01/2013	Caulderton/Ravenglass/Walney/Heysham	0	9	0

Appendix 'B'

" Solway Protector "
PATROL STATISTICS

	1/11/2012 - 31/01/2013		1/8/2012 - 31/10/2012	
Number of patrols and passages	12	patrols	9	patrols
Seatime	89 hrs	10 mins	55 hrs	10 mins
Average length of patrol	7 hrs	25 mins	6 hrs	08 mins
Total distance covered	694	miles	483	miles
Average distance per patrol	58	miles	54	miles
Fuel used	1731	gallons	1267	gallons
Average fuel used per patrol	144	gallons	141	gallons
<u>Total identified sightings:</u>	67	vessels	70	vessels
Local	66	vessels	33	vessels
Visiting	1	vessels	37	vessels
<u>Types of fishing vessels sighted:</u>	<u>< 45'</u>	<u>> 45'</u>	<u>< 45'</u>	<u>> 45'</u>
Trawlers	25	0	17	1
Beam Trawlers	0	0	0	0
Twin Rig Trawlers	0	0	0	29
Pair Trawlers	0	0	0	0
Anchor Seiners	0	0	0	0
Fly Draggers	0	0	0	0
Gill Netters	9	0	3	0
Shrimpers	0	0	1	0
Twin Beam Shrimpers	0	0	2	0
Whelk Potters	0	0	0	0
Potting Boats	16	0	13	0
Scallop Dredgers	0	1	0	0
Mussel Dredgers	0	0	0	3
Cockle Dredgers	0	0	0	0
Netters	0	0	0	0
Anglers	16	0	1	0
<u>Total:</u>	66	1	37	33

NORTHERN (CUMBRIA) DISTRICT

BURGHMARSH POINT TO HAVERIGG POINT

SIFCO, E Thinnesen

GENERAL

This reporting period has resulted in nothing more than the norm for shore patrols for this time of the year. The weather as normal has restricted the local commercial fishermen from getting to sea on occasions, which is to be expected at this time of the year.

Routine patrols throughout the district revealed anglers in their numbers fishing off the piers at Whitehaven, Workington and Maryport on a regular basis, which resulted in the shore officer undertaking both morning and evening patrols over one weekend in December.

TRAWLING

The start of the quarter when undertaking routine inspections of vessels revealed some good catches from the Whitehaven and Maryport based vessels. However an inspection of a trawler in Whitehaven during the second week of December revealed a small amount of prawn (7 stone), supplemented by 4 boxes of skate. The catch didn't seem to improve after an inspection during the first week of January revealed only a few prawns, but vessels fishing skate made better catches of up to 40 boxes for one days fishing. Towards the end of January trawlers reported landings of 30 - 40 boxes of skate but not many prawns.

SHRIMPING

Shrimping in the northern sector of the district is mainly prosecuted out of the port of Silloth. Reports throughout the quarter revealed mixed landings of shrimps e.g., during November catches from 3 shrimping vessels inspected revealed landings of between 35 - 100 kgs for one tide, and inspections in December revealed catches of approximately 250 kgs for one tide.

SCALLOPS

The beginning of the quarter saw all the local Maryport scalloping vessels join the Isle of Man scallop fishery which opened on the 1st November. As indicated in my last report, landings were 30 – 50 bags for the first 12 hours of being open. This was reported to have dropped slightly to 20 – 30 bags per day. Each bag contains 70 kgs bags at 95p per kg resulting in between £1,330 and £1,995 per day.

One inspection of a landing from one of the larger Scottish scallop dredgers revealed a catch of up to 250 bags for a two day trip.

During December landings from scallop vessels inspected revealed on average between 300 and 400 bags. These were from vessels over 21 metres in length, and usually fish outside our district but land their catch into Whitehaven as it is more convenient for them to do so.

POTTING

As to be expected at this time of the year, lobster and brown crab potting effort has been quite low during the period under review. Regular inspections of vessels at the usual landing stations were made with legislation being rigorously enforced. During the second week of November a commercial whelk vessel landed 10 tonnes of whelks into Whitehaven. At the same time a Whitehaven

potting/netting landed 2 x 8st boxes of codlings from nets set off the harbour, along with 10 lobsters for fishing one tide. Inspections were undertaken at the beginning of December in the south of the northern district of lobster and brown crab storage tanks. This revealed approximately 0.75 tonnes of lobster and 25 boxes of brown crabs caught by a commercial vessel during one week. No infringements were detected in this sector during the period.

WINKLE GATHERING

Inspections of the beach at St Bees revealed two winkle gatherers taking around 3 stone and were expecting to sell the winkles for around £5 per stone, at the beginning of November. Winkle gatherers were also evident at the beginning of the New Year at the known marks of Braystones and Nethertown.

OFFSHORE NETTING

There has been some commercial netting carried out throughout the quarter, with some good catches being made by hobby fishermen also. Whilst on a routine patrol during December, Workington netting skippers reported poor landings and being plagued by seals destroying their catch.

BEACH NETTING

Under the old Cumbria SFC byelaw 10 (4) – shallow water fishing (which is still in force) – *the placing and use of fixed engines for taking sea fisheries resources is prohibited within the district, from midnight on 31st May to midnight on 30th November in the same year*, seen no sightings of nets set on any beaches throughout the district during November. From the beginning of December and through to the end of this reporting period, seen a significant amount of effort at Nethertown, Caulderton and Braystones. The netters have reported to have made some good catches of skate around Nethertown, and bass and codling around the Silecroft area around mid-December. However only moderate catches were reported towards the end of the quarter of codling, turbot and mullet.

ANGLING

From the beginning November and throughout the quarter has proved to be extremely popular with anglers, and as usual were seen in large numbers throughout the district. The majority of effort being in the northern part of the area. The piers at Whitehaven, Workington and Maryport proved to be as popular as ever. Catches are reported as being mainly codling, small whiting, dab, flounder and the occasional bass. It was seen as a requirement to undertake various morning and evening patrols over one weekend during the second week of December, in order to educate fishermen due to quite a quantity of small whiting and codling being caught off piers within the district.

BAIT DIGGING

Bait digging throughout the district has been moderate with diggers evident at Drigg and Eskmeals. Six lug worm diggers inspected at Drigg during December, revealing between 200 - 700 in buckets over one tide. These being professional diggers, price per 100 worms is £35-£40.

OTHER DUTIES

The beginning of the quarter I assisted the patrol vessel's crew when undertaking a sub-littoral mussel survey in the Silloth channel. Only the odd day other than that have I stood in as crew member to cover annual leave taken by the patrol boat crew.

During the second week of the quarter, I attended an IT course in Carnforth, along with all other staff who were able to attend. I also attended a course run by CEFAS in order for me to sign off shipments of bivalves being landed by vessels, when the final destination was to other countries.

A routine sample of cockles was removed from Cardurnock Flats, and transported to the Preston lab, for analysis and results supplied to CEFAS.

ENFORCEMENT & EDUCATION

Compliance with our byelaws and national legislation this quarter has on the whole been very good. There has only been one minor breach of the regulations when one fisherman received a verbal warning for landing an undersized codling.

Shore Patrols carried out	44
Total locations visited	664
Routine Inspections	334
Fish holdings inspected	2
Vessels working off shore	99
Total anglers seen	821
Bait Gatherers inspected	20
Shell fish gatherers inspected	7
Beach nets inspected	8
Quad patrols	0
Breaches of regulations	1
Rib Patrols carried out	0
Boarding's and gear inspections by Rib	0

NORTH MORECAMBE BAY

HAVERIGG POINT TO ARNSIDE

IFCO, I. Dixon

TRAWLING

Trawling activity in the Barrow area remains very low key, no sightings have been made of vessels actively trawling and I have had no reports of catches, the trawler 'Talisker' has been well maintained and made ready for fishing but I have yet to see it leave port. I have not seen any of the small trawling boats leave their moorings in Walney channel.

SHRIMPING

Shrimp fishermen using tractors and tra-la-la units from the Flookburgh area and targeting areas in the Kent channel reported moderate catches during November, with up to 7 tractors seen shrimping at any one time, two fishermen favoured the Leven channel and Furness shoreline area with results not being as good as the other side of the Bay but enough were caught of sufficient quality to satisfy existing orders. Shrimp fishing effort from Baycliff and Newbiggin area was lower key than from Flookburgh but reports received suggested the shrimps were of good quality and size, although fishing wasn't carried out on a regular basis.

Shrimp fishing effort dropped in December and no reports or sightings have been received since.

COCKLES

During the last quarter I have had reports of two men from the Barrow area taking up to 20kg each of cockles from the Newbiggin area, possibly to sell around pubs and restaurants in Barrow in the run up to Christmas, subsequent intelligence checks revealed that neither man was a Byelaw 3 permit holder. I discovered one of the men setting a long line in the same area they were sighted cockling later in the month and although he didn't admit to cockling he said he did not know that it was no longer permissible to remove cockles for personal consumption.

I have also heard unconfirmed reports of 2 individuals who are Byelaw 3 permit holders who removed up to 75kg of cockles from the Furness side of Morecambe Bay one night in November, and also have received reports of persons prospecting for cockles.

I continue to take cockle samples for food hygiene tests for South Lakeland District Council, although I have noticed no improvement in stock levels in Aldingham.

The Newbiggin cockle beds were surveyed in November after reports from Shrimp Fishermen suggested an increase in stock levels after sightings of large cockles on the sand after periods of strong winds, survey results did reveal an increase in stock but not enough to consider opening the cockle beds for fishing.

MUSSELS

During November and early December one mussel dredger based in Barrow continued to dredge seed mussel from the South America beds that were kept open until the end of the year, landings were relatively small and mussels were re-laid locally with some exported for which I had to sign export documents on behalf of CEFAS.

There was a lot of interest centred around the seed mussel settlement on Foulney and I have observed several fishermen prospecting in this area, however after consideration at the IFCA quarterly meeting it was deemed that no authorisation would be given to fish for undersize mussels on Foulney.

After inspecting areas of the Foulney mussel bed by IFCA Officers and fishermen it was agreed that there was an area of size mussels which could be gathered. This area was worked by up to 10 permit holders when spring tides allowed access to the area in January, compliance with the size limit was respected throughout.

On the 6th of January I observed one local fishing boat dredging mussels in the Foulney area, 2 local Byelaw 3 permit holders were cautioned and reported for Byelaw 12 offences as they returned to shore at Walney slipway and the dredge and all the mussels were seized.

I continue to take mussel samples from Foulney for Barrow council.

POTTING

During the quarter I have observed one local boat fishing whelk pots in Walney channel and in the Foulney and Roosebeck area. Effort increased in the run up to Christmas with market demands. Landings checked revealed compliance with size limits.

I have not seen or had any reports of any lobster or crab potting either commercially or on a hobby basis.

NETTING

Drift netting continued for Bass during early November but results were not as promising as earlier in the season and effort diminished.

When weather conditions allowed 2 licensed vessels from Barrow were observed netting for cod, targeting the area north of Haverigg, moderate catch returns have been reported.

Only one beach net has been observed during the last quarter, fished on a non commercial basis with catches consisting mainly of flounders and dogfish.

ANGLING

Angling remains very popular around the Furness coastline, both from the shore and from small boats, the usual hotspots on Walney, Barrow docks, Newbiggin and in the Leven estuary continued to attract anglers with reports consisting mainly of Flounders, with some Bass early in the quarter, some Plaice were reported and a good showing of codling towards the end of the quarter. I continue to distribute fish size information leaflets and educate anglers on minimum landing sizes but compliance is generally very good, with many participating just for the sport.

The number of long lines set in the furness area has reduced with only a couple observed and checked in the Newbiggin area.

GENERAL

During this quarter I have assisted colleagues in enforcement duties at Southport on the cockle fishery, and I have assisted the Officer who covers the North Cumbria area in enforcement and sampling duties. I have assisted the crew of the Solway Protector in carrying out sampling duties.

I have assisted the two new Fisheries Officers in familiarising themselves with the area and the duties and practices carried out as an IFCO.

I have also been busy preparing the new premises at Barrow and transferring equipment from the Ulverston garage.

NORTHERN AREA

ARNSIDE TO KNOTT END

SIFCO, S. J. Waite

TRAWLING

This fishery continues to be extremely low key. I have observed no trawling activity taking place either on a commercial or hobby basis. The fishery continues to prove very disappointing and I expect no improvement in the foreseeable future.

SHRIMPS

Effort in the inshore fishery this last quarter tailed away with very little activity taking place. As a result fishermen reduced their effort to the occasional scouting trip, weather and tides permitting. Effort by hobby fishermen working small inshore shrimp boats remained low key.

I have observed no activity by fishermen working both tractor and tra la la units or push nets.

COCKLES

This last quarter I have checked cockle beds on an occasional basis. I have received no reports of gatherers removing cockles from any of the cockle beds in my area.

All recognised cockle beds in my area have seen no improvement in stocks of mature and immature cockles and as a result all beds in my area remain closed.

MUSSELS

During this last quarter I have observed nor received any reports of mature mussels being gathered throughout the south side of Morecambe Bay. What mussels have been harvested by fishermen associated with mussel gathering in my area have been from beds on the North side of Morecambe Bay.

During this last quarter I have continued to collect shellfish samples for Lancaster City Council and Wyre District Council.

DRIFT STAKE AND SET NETS

This quarter saw the end of the seasonal bass fishery. As a result fishermen associated with the inshore bass fishery removed their boats from their moorings in readiness for working on their boats and gear for the return of the bass fishery. Unfortunately, as I mentioned in my last quarter, this fishery's future is currently moving towards a part time or hobby basis as fishermen reach retirement or look towards other ways of making a more stable income.

During the early part of the quarter effort from fishermen working set and stake nets remained limited to a few fishermen working nets towards the top of Morecambe Bay, with occasional nets being set at Heysham and Pilling. During the second half of the quarter almost all nets were removed from the fishery. Whitebait nets have again been set in the Lune Estuary, fishing selected tides. To date landings of whitebait have proved disappointing, although sprats have proved better.

DINGHY AND SHORE ANGLING

During this last quarter effort fell away sharply as a result of very strong winds making conditions arduous.

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 and Arnside.

During this last quarter information notices have been placed throughout my area where shore angling takes place to inform fishermen of the proposed ban on all fishing activity in the Heysham Bass Nursery Area. Fishermen have been given 28 days' notice to write to the Office regarding any complaints.

CENTRAL AREA

RIVER WYRE TO RIVER ALT

SIFCO, S. Brown

GENERAL

The need for intensive policing of the Ribble cockle fishery has taken up a great deal of time and effort. I wish to record my thanks for the not inconsiderable efforts made by other members of staff to assist me with this task.

The almost unheard of variations in the weather with gales, snow, rain, ice and surprisingly warm spells have prevented any of the inshore fisheries settling down. Boat fishermen and those without a Byelaw 3 permit have had a particularly hard time.

TRAWLING

Inshore trawling from Fleetwood has been very restricted by the poor weather. In addition the sprawling mass of wind farms from W X N of Lune up to the Prawn Ground has taken most of the grounds traditionally worked during the late Autumn and Winter months from the fishery. This problem combined with that of a totally inadequate compensation regime has recently been highlighted in parliament by the local MP.

In addition fishermen are extremely concerned about what terms will be placed upon the proposed MCZ that will cover the Shell Flat Bank and Blackpool fisheries and looking further ahead the Lune Deep SAC proposal. Given the proven robustness of the features listed it is to be hoped that reason can prevail as these are the only fishing grounds available to what remains of the inshore fleet.

The area's one large remaining trawler has found some work on standby duties.

SHRIMPING

Despite the extremes of weather the shrimp fishery in the Penfold Channel produced workable catches into December. The Lytham shrimp boats were seen working the S Gut and outside of the Penfold Channel.

Push netting off the N Fylde produced some reasonable catches through into the New Year before the snow water finally drove the shrimps further offshore.

COCKLES/MUSSELS

The Authority's plan to keep the southern Ribble cockle beds open for as long as possible while keeping the Foulaze bed closed for brood stock and safety reasons worked well. The exposed S Gut and Penfold beds have been worked down to low levels leaving suitable areas available for stock resettlement.

The exciting prospect of a stock reseedling from the extremely vulnerable Penfold N bed is proposed, however the fishermen concerned are awaiting funding for this work. The men involved in this project are not eligible for Byelaw 3 permits and are therefore unable to reap what they sow. The future of this potentially far reaching project depends on securing suitable funding for it to continue.

The Lytham mussel fishery continues to develop providing small quantities for a local processor. It is however a matter of concern that these admittedly competent fishermen are working mussel beds to the seaward of the Foulaze cockle bed that we have closed partially on safety grounds.

NETS

Shore netting has been effectively prevented by the prolonged onshore winds and the significant amount of debris brought down the rivers by the fresh set.

The Lytham drift netters did manage a few trips reporting disappointing catches however the return of a few coastal cod was welcomed.

ANGLING

Angling remains popular from both shore and small boat. The hardy souls that have fished the Fylde coast have been rewarded with catches of Cod, Whiting and a few Dabs.

ENFORCEMENT

Much of the enforcement work carried out this quarter has been a team effort covering the Penfold Channel fisheries. There were very few attempts to bypass the permit inspection regime set up at Marshside when the fishery was under way. For my part I have recorded 76 Byelaw (mostly permit) inspections for the quarter and issued one verbal warning.

When possible routine patrols of other areas have been undertaken. The ATV has covered 197.3 nautical miles on patrol and sample gathering work. Again I wish to record my thanks to all the other members of staff who assisted in the various policing operations undertaken to cover the recent surge in cockle harvesting activity.

SOUTHERN AREA

MERSEY, WIRRAL AND DEE

IFCO, A. Brownrigg

GENERAL

Officer support to the Ribble Estuary has been my primary task for this quarter. Other activities such as sampling and survey work have been undertaken throughout the district during bed closure.

SPECIFIC

COCKLING

The cockle bed within the area remains closed, and will continue to do so during the rest of the 2013 cockling season in order to allow the bed to settle. Routine hygiene samples from Wirral North cockle bed continue to be collected on behalf of Mersey Port Health Authority and samples from Penfold North Cockle bed for West Lancashire Borough Council will continue throughout the forthcoming months. Presently, only adult size shell fish remain from 2010's spat.

SHORE ANGLING

Due to poor weather and my commitments to Southport, I have not been able to give accurate numbers of shore anglers within the area; however, recreational angling continues to take place. The north Wirral coastline, Otterspool Promenade and New Brighton remain popular.

BOAT ANGLING

Registered and unregistered fishing vessels remain in abundance in the River Mersey and Liverpool Bay. Over the weekends, 35 - 50 small to medium size fishing vessels can be observed fishing at any one time and in excess of 50 during competition times is not uncommon. Over the winter period one particular vessel caught over 276 codling with 50 – 60 over 6lb in weight.

BAIT DIGGERS

Bait diggers, roughly 1 - 3 in number, can be seen daily along the North Wirral coastline, with New Brighton, Mockbeggar Wharf and the area of beach off Leasowe Common being identified as the most popular.

SEA ANGLING 2012 SURVEY

Sea Angling 2012 continues to take place within my area and all comments and remarks from anglers are positive. The distribution of fliers regarding the Sea Angling Survey 2012 remains ongoing.

ENFORCEMENT

During the last quarter I have been relocated to support the opening of South Ribble cockle beds, enforcing at times up to 161 Byelaw 3 permit holders who were accessing the beds daily. Several verbal warnings have been issued for the non- carriage/production of a Byelaw 3 permit and one caution has been issued with an investigation on going. No undersize cockle was observed throughout my time.

'PROTECTOR ALPHA'

After the closure of the Foulnaze cockle bed in October 2012, 'Protector Alpha' the area's 5m Rigid Inflatable Boat (RIB) was removed from the water to undergo coding. The boat which is some 18 years old has had a large amount of money, time and effort invested to make the vessel seaworthy. As part of the coding process, the vessel underwent a pressure test on its inflatable tubes and was issued with a pass certificate. The vessel will now undergo a stability test which will include an incline and damage control test. On successful completion 'Protector Alpha' will be coded to work up to 3 miles from a nominated departure point (primarily Liverpool Marina) in daylight hours. This, however, is not ideal. The age and limited capabilities of the vessel, such as size and power, restrict the vessel's enforcement and surveying capabilities. At this time, the boat is being used as an interim solution, providing limited support, until a more suitable replacement is invested in. Several visits have already been undertaken to RIB manufactures to source a replacement. Subject to successful completion of the coding, 'Protector Alpha' should be available for limited enforcement and surveying tasks from March onwards. 'Protector Alpha', upon retirement, would make an ideal training vessel, offering in-house training to all IFCA officers and scientific staff.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Daily shore patrols along the River Mersey, North Wirral Coastline and Dee Estuary remain ongoing, and officer support has been offered to other areas in the form of Shore/ATV patrols. Finally, assistance to the Gangmasters Licensing Association, Mersey Port Health Authority, Merseyside Police and both Wirral and Sefton Councils remains ongoing.