

NWIFCA Quarterly Meeting

20 September 2013: 11.00 a.m.

AGENDA
ITEM NO.
10

Head of Enforcement Report on the **Fisheries for the Period 1st May to 31st July 2013.**

GENERAL

Despite the "Solway Protector" being hampered with engineering problems the vessel conducted 20 patrols during the quarter. "Protector Bravo" (RIB based in Whitehaven) is currently going through the final stages of work to complete compliance with coding. "Protector Gamma" (based in Barrow) and the Morecambe based Zodiac are fully operational and have proved invaluable in a number of enforcement scenarios during the quarter.

Increased cooperation with other agencies, including Lancashire constabulary, GLA, Fylde Council, the Coastguard the Environment Agency and assistance from the Isles of Man Authorities enhanced the IFCA's enforcement presence during the quarter.

The flexibility and enthusiasm of the enforcement officers has proved invaluable during the quarter in meeting the higher enforcement burden placed on the IFCA.

ENFORCEMENT

Compliance across the district was generally good. Enforcement action was required in the following fisheries during the quarter.

- At the Foulnaze Cockle fishery for failure to have correct certification for a boat endorsed permit
- At the Foulney Mussel fishery for unpermitted gathering of mussels
- Enforcement action regarding recreational shellfish gathering at Leasowe and in the Blackpool area
- Enforcement of marking of hobby permit gear in the Barrow area (Byelaw 11)
- Enforcement of the new Byelaw 5 at Heysham

WEATHER

The weather during the reporting period was generally favourable with protracted periods of fine weather. This offered decent opportunities for fishing activity throughout the district, although the high temperatures hampered the shrimp fisheries.

MUSSELS

Fishing effort on Foulney mussel bed continued on spring tides during the quarter with 30-40 in regular attendance. This fishery drew to a close due to market influences and a large spat settlement on the bed causing problems with the gathering of size Mussels. Enforcement issues during this fishery are outlined above. A successful meeting with fishermen who operate at Foulney was held during the quarter.

COCKLES

The quarter saw the opening of the Foulnaze cockle bed in the Ribble estuary. The fishery was opened within the Byelaw 3 closed period under derogation from the 22nd – 26th July. The notice restricted access to the fishery to Seaford slip, Lytham, for boat endorsed permit holders only.

The 1st block of tides saw the following effort:

- Attendance was around the 120 mark
- Three transport boats operated, supporting 5 buyers
- 114t of cockle was removed from the bed during this block of tides
- See agenda item 12 for full update on the fishery

The enforcement plan implemented involved IFCOs:

- Operating a check point at Seafield slip, Lytham, for permitted access
- Policing the southern and northern sides of the estuary to counter un-permitted activity
- Regular IFCO presence on the Foulnaze bed using “Protector Gamma” or the Zodiac

No attempts to gain unpermitted access to the bed were detected during the block of tides being reported. All enforcement action involved breaches of the derogation under which the fishery was opened. At the time of writing the fishery has passed with no safety problems, complaints from local residents or negative press coverage.

A full report on the Foulnaze fishery up to 6th September is attached at Annex A.

TRAWLING

Trawling effort during the quarter was concentrated in the North of the district with good catches of Nephrops being landed, particularly during July. Trawling elsewhere in the district was at low levels during the quarter.

SHRIMPING

Shrimping effort and catches generally increased through the quarter but remained variable. Catches in July were hampered by the increasing temperatures.

POTTING

The quarter saw the on-set of the summer potting fishery, concentrated up North as usual with catches of Crab/Lobster and whelks being taken. Increased potting activity was also seen in the Barrow area

NETTING

Netting increased with the on-set of summer across the district. As alluded to in IFCO Dixons report clarification with the industry was required as to the responsibility of enforcing UK licensed F/V's and Registered Buyers and Sellers (RBS) legislation during the quarter.

ANGLING

The seasonal increase in angling was observed across the district. The quarter saw the new Byelaw 5 (Heysham Bass Nursery) come into force. A total of 22 patrols were conducted at Heysham to ensure compliance. This type of Byelaw represents a shift from the traditional activities of IFCOs regulating a recognised industry to the policing of individual and recreational activities and personal behaviour which IFCOs MACAA powers do not reflect. The assistance of the police was obtained on recent patrols at Heysham. Such assistance is occasionally essential when fishermen refuse to give their identity and arrest is necessary.

Compliance with Minimum Landing Sizes (MLS) by anglers was good during the quarter.

Andrew Deary
Head of Enforcement

Foulnaze Cockle Fishery Update to 6 September 2013

1. A stock assessment conducted by the IFCA in spring 2013 showed a stock of 550t of large 2010 year class cockles in the Foulnaze bed. Due to the large size and maturity of the cockles the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) did not require a Total Allowed Catch (TAC) to be set for either the purposes of bird food resource or stock management. Therefore the full 550t could be removed from the bed or it could be fished until the catch ceased to be economic.

Date	Tonnage Removed	Daily Attendance
22 nd July p.m. tide	22.5	113
23 rd July p.m. tide	N/A	101
24 th July p.m. tide	47 (for 23 rd and 24 th)	101
25 th July p.m. tide	22.7	103
26 th July p.m. tide	21.8	106
Total	114	524
5 th August p.m. tide	17.2	119
6 th August p.m. tide	21	121
7 th August p.m. tide	22.2	124
8 th August p.m. tide	23.2	79
9 th August a.m. tide	28.4	116
Total	112	559
19 th August p.m. tide	11.5	88
20 th August p.m. tide	16.8	94
21 st August p.m. tide	N/A	102
22 nd August a.m. tide	16.6 (for 21 st and 22 nd)	38
Total	44.9	322
3 rd Sept p.m. tide	4.6	37
4 th Sept p.m. tide	4.4	35
5 th Sept p.m. tide	3.3	27
6 th Sept p.m. tide	1.7	14
Total	14	113
Totals	284.9	1518

Table 1: Fishing dates, catch records and numbers of fishermen

2. The fishery was opened initially under derogation within the closed season defined in paragraph 12 of Byelaw 3. This derogation was issued as a “*Notice of Regulations*” under paragraph 10 of Byelaw 3. This notice placed certain restrictions on the opening of the fishery for the purposes of management, assisting enforcement and minimising disruption to local residents:

- Open tides were designated and restricted to blocks of spring tides (Mon-Fri).
- Access to the fishery was restricted to that by boat from Seafield slip, Lytham.

- Due to boat access only – only Byelaw 3 permit holders who had a boat endorsed permit were permitted to access the fishery (paragraph 28). Only Byelaw 3 permit holders who held Power Boat 2 were permitted to skipper any small vessel.
 - Cockles were only permitted to be landed at Preston Marina.
 - Transportation of cockles was restricted to the large transport vessels operating and licensed fishing vessels.
3. The fishery has so far seen four blocks (18 tides in total) of spring tides opened and 284.9t of cockle has been removed from the bed as shown in table 1. The daily attendees started around the 100 mark during block one and increased during block two as gatherers completed required certification to a peak of 124 on the 7th August. Daily attendance has dropped to a very low level on the last set of open tides (3rd – 6th Sept) as the daily catches have dropped. Annex A gives a daily breakdown of attendance levels and stock removed from the fishery so far. The records taken at the Lytham check point have recorded 1518 individual fishing days in the fishery.
4. As per the “*Notice of Regulations*” alluded to above all cockles were required to be moved off the bed on the large transport vessels or licensed fishing vessels and landed into Preston Marina. During the first three blocks of tides three transport vessels operated, with these being utilised by five buyers. As the fishery continued and the initial bulk of the stock was removed from the bed a number of buyers pulled out of the fishery. By the completion of block four on the 6th Sept one transport vessel with 1 buyer remained. No other licensed fishing vessels transported cockles to Preston.

Enforcement

5. An enforcement plan and operations order was implemented on each block of open tides. The enforcement effort consisted of the following presence:
- A check point at Lytham for permitted access to the fishery
 - The NWIFCA enforcement team regularly conducted checks on the Foulhaze bed during the open tides accessing the bed by means of the NWIFCA Barrow based RIB or the Morecambe zodiac.
 - Two roving teams, to ensure no vehicular access from the Southport side or boat access from the Lytham side of the estuary.
 - A regular presence on the Lytham and Southport coasts on high risk tides out with the open tides.
6. Compliance was good in the context of around 100 gatherers attending the fishery on each of the 18 open tides. The following enforcement actions have been taken at the time of writing:

Sanction	Number
Cautions	8
Written Warnings	N/A Decisions pending
Verbal Warnings	16

7. All but three (three cautions of the eight cautions) of the enforcement actions outlined above related to permitted gathers breaching Byelaw 3 stipulations or the “*Notice of Regulations*”. Three cautions were issued due to suspected non-permitted offences being detected. No attempts to gain access to the bed from the north or south side of the estuary were detected. Only 1 instance of a non-permitted gatherer on the bed was detected.

Head of Enforcement
September 2013

Master of the “Solway Protector” - H Thinnesen

“SOLWAY PROTECTOR”

Unfortunately the “Solway Protector” has again been offline for most of the quarter mainly due to mechanical problems and crewing issues.

As previously reported the vessel was taken out of service with a port main engine gear box fault. The engine and gear box were removed from the vessel in order to carry out further investigations. The problem was traced back to a fractured drive plate coupling. Unfortunately the vessel was offline for several weeks, removal, repairs and installation were carried out by the patrol boat crew. Further repairs were also carried out during the reporting period which are as follows:

- Renew exhaust line on “Webasto” heating system
- Repair generator fuel system
- Replace main battery charging unit
- Fit new alternator on port main engine
- Repair coolant leak on port main engine
- Port engine after cooler line repaired
- Starboard main engine raw water system overhauled
- Fit new starboard engine bilge pump
- Renew port main engine exhaust adaptor
- Recurring electrical faults being attended to

While carrying out a routine patrol on 10th July 2013 we lost power on the starboard main engine. The vessel was returned back to port on one engine. While mooring up on our usual berth, steam was seen venting from the engine room compartment. The port engine was stopped and an investigation was carried out on both engines. The fault on the starboard main engine was traced back to a faulty valve on the fuel transfer pump. On the port engine, coolant had been venting out of the header tank, this problem was eventually traced back to a blocked heat exchanger, due to silt and heavy corrosion. It was fortunate we lost the second engine while coming back alongside, had this occurred on transit back to the harbour this would have certainly resulted in the vessel needing towed by either the lifeboat or the assistance of another sizeable vessel in the vicinity. The weather on the day was light, and we were not operating in shallow water, otherwise the health and safety issues relating to getting the vessel back to port could have been quite a different. The vessel was back in service again in full working order, after sea trials were carried out on the 26th July.

On 31st July 2013 when returning from a routine patrol, the vessel was alongside in the sea lock at Whitehaven when an unusual sound was heard on the port engine. The engine was closed down immediately and the vessel was berthed up using one engine. On investigation it was found that the exhaust valve on no: 6 cylinder, had dropped. Whilst not in this reporting period, the port engine had again to be removed for further examination. Once the engine was removed from the vessel and the top end of the engine stripped down, the full extent of the damage caused by the dropped valve was revealed. When the valve had dropped severe damage was caused to the piston and cylinder head. These items were beyond repair and had to be replaced. Again removal, repairs and reinstallation of the port engine were carried out by the patrol boat crew.

All oil and planned maintenance schedules are up to date.

“PROTECTOR BRAVO” – 7 metre Osprey Viper - RIB

Unfortunately “Protector Bravo” remains offline up until the time of writing this report. We hope to have the vessel back in service within the next couple of weeks.

PATROLS, BOARDINGS AND INSPECTIONS

Mechanical breakdowns and crewing problems when officers were on leave, has again resulted in only a handful of patrols being carried out during the quarter. Nevertheless these totalled 20.

Sightings made from the “Solway Protector” totalled 181 with 82 of these being from visiting vessels. No sightings were recorded from “Protector Bravo” as the vessel remains offline.

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

WEATHER

On the whole the weather has been mainly settled during the quarter, with only a handful of days per month when vessels were unable to put to sea. This in turn resulted in some good fishing opportunities for the local and visiting fleets.

OFFSHORE TRAWLING

This quarter gave rise to good nephrop (prawn) fishing within the district and reports of the larger vessels making heavy landings into Whitehaven. Vessels working the prawn grounds fished mainly through the night along with the larger vessels working on through the day as well. Only light fin fish landings were made during this period, as most of the vessels were concentrating on the nephrop fishery.

POTTING & OFFSHORE NETTING

Landings on the whole from the potting sector has been quite buoyant throughout the quarter, with good landings being reported. Netting overall has been hit and miss, however thornback ray landings remain good.

SURVEYS

We have started a ground discrimination survey in the upper Silloth Channel. This is going to be quite a lengthy process as the equipment on board “Solway Protector” is quite limited, along with only being able to carry out this work when enforcement duties are light. Hopefully we will be able to build up a better picture of the sea bed along with different sediment types in the Silloth area, once the survey is completed.

JOINT ENFORCEMENT

On 23rd July reports were received regarding a net set off St Bees Head which allegedly trapped guillemots contained within it. Unfortunately as all our enforcement vessels were offline and had no means available to recover the net, I made contact with the Environment Agency to assist, however their patrol boat skipper was on leave and had no available crew.

The Manx fisheries protection vessel “Barrule” was visiting Whitehaven on that day in order to undertake a joint patrol with the MMO, and was berthed alongside the fuel berth. After speaking with the master of the patrol vessel and the MMO enforcement officer, we agreed to undertake a joint patrol and recover the illegal, unmarked net. There was however no guillemots or other birds caught within it.

More often than enough, situations like this occur and IFCA officers need to react quickly to issues like this when they arise. In this particular case we were fortunate that the Isle of Man patrol vessel was in the area, and was willing to assist.

It cannot be stressed enough, the need for the IFCA to be fully equipment with modern, up-to-date vessels and equipment. It is vitally important that these vessels are appropriately crewed and fit to put to sea at all times, in order for the IFCA to carry out their statutory duties safely and efficiently.

Regarding the report of seabirds being caught in nets off St Bees Head, the RSPB have issued warnings through the local weekly newspaper (Annex 'A') of the dangers of seabirds getting entangled in gill nets, and is advising that fishermen who use the nets to steer clear of St Bees Head in the summer months.

H THINNESEN

Master "Solway Protector" & 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.
21/05/2013	Prawn pitch/Maryport	0	5	10
25/05/2013	Maryport Trawler Race	6	6	0
11/06/2013	Walney/Fleetwood/Heysham	4	14	0
12/06/2013	Radar watch Saltom Bay	0	4	0
18/06/2013	Harrington/St Bees Head/Selker/Whitehaven	0	6	35
20/06/2013	West of Whitehaven	5	3	20
25/06/2013	West of Sellafeld/Workington/Maryport	18	5	20
26/06/2013	Prawn pitch/Coulderton (sounder trials)	0	6	25
27/06/2013	Silloth - survey and Prawn pitch	11	12	30
28/06/2013	Prawn pitch/St Bees Head	8	4	0
03/07/2013	Southern prawn grounds	11	7	15
04/07/2013	Prawn pitch/SW Haverigg	11	10	55
05/07/2013	South prawn grounds/North Head	17	7	0
07/07/2013	Prawn pitch/North Head	27	5	30
08/07/2013	Southern prawn grounds	19	3	30
09/07/2013	W Walney - W Sellafeld	24	12	0
10/07/2013	Prawn pitch/Starboard engine failure	11	3	30
29/07/2013	West of Whitehaven/Prawn pitch/Maryport	4	7	30
30/07/2013	SW of ST Bees Head/Prawn pitch/Parton	2	7	25
31/07/2013	W of Sellafeld/Selker	3	7	30

" Solway Protector "
PATROL STATISTICS

	1/5/2013 - 31/7/2013		1/2/2013 - 30/4/2013	
Number of patrols and passages	20	patrols	2	patrols
Seatime	139 hrs	25 mins	1 hrs	45 mins
Average length of patrol	6 hrs	58 mins	0 hrs	53 mins
Total distance covered	1150	miles	24	miles
Average distance per patrol	57	miles	12	miles
Fuel used	2676	gallons	220	gallons
Average fuel used per patrol	134	gallons	110	gallons
<u>Total identified sightings:</u>	181	vessels	0	vessels
Local	99	vessels	0	vessels
Visiting	82	vessels	0	vessels
<u>Types of fishing vessels sighted:</u>	<u>< 45'</u>	<u>> 45'</u>	<u>< 45'</u>	<u>> 45'</u>
Trawlers	53	10	0	0
Beam Trawlers	0	0	0	0
Twin Rig Trawlers	0	59	0	0
Pair Trawlers	0	0	0	0
Anchor Seiners	0	0	0	0
Fly Draggars	0	0	0	0
Gill Netters	0	0	0	0
Shrimpers	0	0	0	0
Twin Beam Shrimpers	0	0	0	0
Whelk Potters	0	0	0	0
Potting Boats	18	0	0	0
Scallop Dredgers	0	0	0	0
Mussel Dredgers	0	0	0	0
Cockle Dredgers	0	0	0	0
Netters	0	0	0	0
Anglers	41	0	0	0
<u>Total:</u>	112	69	0	0

GENERAL

During this reporting period the usual shores, ports and landing sites were checked on a regular basis, with activity from recreational anglers from Whitehaven gathering pace as the quarter progressed. The prawn trawlers for the first two months of the quarter found catches moderate to poor, with July catches of prawns (nephrops) proving more plentiful. The shrimpers and potters have been active, making good use of the fair weather experienced recently. On the whole there were activities seen from all sectors of the fishing community during the reporting period.

TRAWLING

From early May up to the end of June seen some busy periods of fishing when weather conditions were suitable. Vessels targeting prawns fished throughout the night as well as during the day time. Inspections at ports revealed some moderate to poor landings at the beginning of the period, 20-30 stones of prawn and very little fish. June turned out to be no better, however fishing started to pick up as the summer came into full swing. July seen some bonanza fishing from prawn boats, both local and visitors alike. Reports (via the Master of the "Solway Protector", as I have been on sick leave since the end of June) were that some visiting twin rigged vessels landed over 800 stone each. Local vessels fared reasonably well, although the local fleet are much smaller in size but they still got their fair share of the bonanza.

SHRIMPING

Reports throughout the quarter relate to mixed landings of shrimps from 50-200 kgs for one tide. Prices for shrimp have increased recently to as high as £5.00 per kg. Maryport vessels targeting shrimp over on the Scottish side of the Solway have had days when catches have been over 300 kilos, giving them a good days pay. This fishing lasted for a week or two.

POTTING

Potting for lobster, brown crab and whelks have seen busy periods throughout the quarter, with landings from vessels at times being 10 x 100 kg boxes of brown crab and 25 - 45 kgs of lobster for one days fishing. Inspections throughout the quarter have seen no infringements being detected in this sector of the district.

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 within our district, as all catches were from Scottish waters in the Solway Firth and areas around Mull of Galloway.

Regular landings have been made from the permitted, hobby potting fishermen who fish five 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. Regular inspections of vessels at the usual landing stations were made throughout the period with legislation being rigorously enforced. Prices over the quarter for lobster averaged out at £10 per kg.

OFFSHORE NETTING

Reports from this sector are patchy, as some areas are seeing good numbers of thornback rays, and others are lucky to see any fish at all. Most of the thornback rays seen were caught from the area north of St Bees Head.

BEACH NETTING

Twenty nets were seen and inspected in May with catches of sea bass, mullet, and the odd codling and thornback ray being caught. Nearly all the effort seen was from the Nethertown and Braystones area, with the odd one around Maryport.

ANGLING

Throughout the period an increase in the number of anglers started to target early mackerel from mostly Whitehaven, with over 400 anglers seen and half of them actually being inspected. Some were catching up to 50 mackerel per tide, and some were getting 4 – 6 fish on a single line.

At other stations some dabs, small codlings and odd bass were caught, with bass starting to be caught in greater numbers from the beaches. One inspection saw an angler with 4 for just one hours fishing.

BAIT GATHERERS

Bait Diggers -

Bait digging throughout the district has not been monitored to the same extent this year as in previous years. This in the main was due to having no supporting officer when inspections needed to be undertaken out on the beds, via quad bike. Nevertheless, over 40 were seen and inspected. Some of these were hobby fishermen digging for their own use, while others were commercial diggers. 100-700 worms a tide has been taken at times by the commercial diggers.

Bait Crabbers –

Crabbers have been seen in good numbers mostly north of Maryport, with 110 having been seen and inspected. No brown crab have been seen in the buckets, and concerns have been voiced from local crabbers about the amount of visitors coming and taking “every crab they find”, with up to 300-500 crabs which can be taken for a few days fishing. Prices for these crabs can be up to £1.50 per crab, with “big money” being made.

Officer Statistics for the period 1st May – 26th June 2013

Shore Patrols	27
Fishing Locations visited	365
Quad Patrols	7
Locations by quad	58
Anglers seen	460
Bait Diggers and crabbers seen	146
Shellfish gatherers (Winkle Pickers)	2
Inspections all	424
Beach nets inspected	20
Days assisting other areas of district	1

NORTH MORECAMBE BAY

HAVERIGG POINT TO ARNSIDE

IFCO, Ian Dixon

TRAWLING

During the last quarter I have neither observed nor had any reports of commercial trawling activity. I have observed a small boat trawling in Walney channel targeting Plaice and shrimps, on a hobby basis, reports suggest very little was caught.

SHRIMPING

Shrimping activity in the North Morecambe Bay area increased during May and June with as many as 9 tractor and tra-la-la units observed, early efforts seemed to be concentrated on the Leven channel area and the mussel hollow, before becoming spread across the bay in later periods of June, in the Kent channel and Goldmine area. Catches were reported to be moderate at best, with fishermen needing to go shrimping in order to fulfil demand from regular customers. Effort reduced in the hot weather experienced in July. Shrimping effort increased in the Newbiggin and Baycliff area towards the end of July when 2 tractors were seen working regularly.

COCKLES

I have observed no cockling activity during the last quarter, neither have I had any reports of cockling on North Morecambe Bay.

I continue to take Food Hygiene samples from Flookburgh, Leven Island, Newbiggin and Aldingham for South Lakeland District Council, however there is no noticeable increase in stock levels in this area.

MUSSELS

Mussel gathering continued on all the spring tides during May and June on Foulney mussel bed. However a heavy spatfall made gathering more difficult in some areas. Up to 30 gatherers were checked gathering mussels with several reported for gathering undersize mussels and being made to relay these. Two gatherers were reported for fishing without a permit and the mussels they gathered were seized. IFCA Officers were enforcing minimum landing sizes out on the mussel bed where several gatherers were made to empty bags containing undersize mussels. Mussel gathering stopped at the end of June due to market issues. Since then I have only had reports of two permit holders gathering mussels on the spring tide at the end of July.

A meeting was held with all the gatherers from Foulney plus the merchants and IFCA staff to try and work out a management plan for the future of Foulney mussel bed.

The South America seed mussel bed near Foulney has again seen a great deal of interest from Mussel harvesting companies from Ireland, Wales and England, this area has been surveyed by IFCA staff and looks set to open in August to dredgers.

I continue to take mussel samples from Foulney for Barrow Borough Council.

NETTING

During the last quarter netting effort increased in the Barrow area, with 9 locally based boats observed or reported drift netting in Morecambe Bay and the Irish sea coast of Walney. Compliance with IFCA byelaws has been good with any checks revealing complete compliance with net mesh size, gear marking and fish size landed. Catches have been moderate at best, no large hauls have been reported as yet. There seems to be some misunderstanding of the IFCA's responsibilities in this area due to several complaints being made to both myself and the IFCA Office claiming we are not doing our job, despite it being pointed out that IFCA are not responsible for unlicensed boats which the complainants are alleging are fishing for profit, and other complaints from anglers who believe that all netting is illegal.

Beach netting effort has increased throughout the quarter. Several beach nets have been checked in the Duddon estuary at Askam, set by permit holders and fishing for flounders for pot bait.

Three nets were tagged by myself in the Leven estuary near Priory point for having unmarked buoys on them, this was soon sorted out by the fisherman who was new to the industry and quickly applied for the correct permit and marked his nets accordingly. Several other nets have

been checked at Sandgate and the Flookburgh area and all found to be legal, catches have included several Bass but mainly Flounder, with some Plaice and Mullet.

Several reports were received of netting and long lines set near Holme Island at Grange over Sands, causing a problem to the public on the beach and also because the net was apparently set close to the prohibited netting area. Several patrols in this area have not uncovered any nets or lines.

POTTING

During the last quarter potting effort has increased due to a commercial potting boat arriving in Barrow and working up to 200 pots regularly. However catches have been moderate at best with many undersize lobster being caught and returned. A verbal warning was issued to the crew of the boat 'Kellin Star' due to 1 undersize lobster being found already banded on board when he was boarded on a boat patrol, the lobster was returned. Also the crew of 'Kellin Star' were warned about marking their gear correctly, which they complied with during a week of the gear being inspected.

Several unmarked or incorrectly marked hobby pots were tagged and then later lifted from the sea in front of Walney by the IFCA boat, these were later returned to the owner who had not put his permit number on them despite holding an IFCA byelaw 30 permit.

The vessel BW263 has also been observed fishing whelk pots on two occasions this quarter.

ANGLING

Angling continues to be popular around the Furness coastline, with numbers increasing as reports of Bass being caught are heard.

During the last quarter boat angling has increased dramatically with up to 30 rod boat trailers being observed at Walney slipway. IFCA boat patrols have checked several boat anglers and compliance with landing sizes has been good, daily catches of up to 20 Bass have been observed, with one report of over 40 Bass taken in a day by one angler.

GENERAL

During this quarter I have assisted Officers from other areas on the cockle fishery at Lytham, and in enforcing the beach net closed season from Silecroft northwards.

I have undertaken export checks on behalf of CEFAS for mussel exports from Barrow and for Oyster exports from the Oyster Hatchery on Walney.

SOUTH MORECAMBE BAY

ARNSIDE TO KNOTT END

Senior IFCO, S. J. Waite

SHRIMPS

Effort in the inshore fishery fell back during this last period on the previous quarter. Fishermen associated with this fishery reported extremely poor catches of shrimps compounded by nets being fouled with weed and rubbish. I have observed no effort from fishermen working on a hobby basis working small inshore shrimp boats.

I have also observed no activity by fishermen working tractor and tra la la units due to very poor ground and fishermen reporting problems with nets being clogged up with weed.

During this last quarter I have observed no activity from fishermen using push nets.

TRAWLING

This fishery continues to be extremely low key. I have observed no trawling activity taking place either on a commercial or hobby basis. This fishery continues to prove very disappointing and, as reported in previous reports, I expect no improvement in the inshore boat fishery.

COCKLES

This last quarter I have checked cockle beds on an occasional basis. I received one report towards the end of this last quarter regarding Chinese gatherers working 50 yds off the front in central Morecambe. On arrival I found one family who were gathering cockles. After informing them that the beds were closed all cockles were returned and the family left. I have received no other reports.

All recognised cockle beds in my area have seen no improvement in stocks of either mature or immature cockles with stock levels proving very poor. I see no improvement in this fishery in the foreseeable future and 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.

This last quarter, along with Joe Moulton, I carried out surveys on all mussel beds in my area. As reported in my last quarterly report, very good settlements of seed mussels remain on most of the recognised mussel beds with the exception of Bare Ayre Skear.

Heysham Flat Skear has again seen the best settlement of seed. I would expect the Skear to open at some point in the future for the removal of seed mussel as has been the practice in previous years.

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

DRIFT STAKE AND SET NETS

During this last quarter all recognised inshore drift net boats were returned to their seasonal moorings. Effort in this fishery remains low key although landings have proved average with previous years. Prices for Bass, however, remain poor. Unfortunately, as mentioned in my last quarter, this fishery's future is mainly moving towards a part time basis as fishermen reach retirement or look to other ways of making a more stable income.

Stake and set nets have again been fished although effort remains low key. Effort has been limited to occasional nets being fished towards the top of Morecambe Bay and occasional nets being set on Pilling Sands. Netsmen associated with fishing in the Heysham Bass Nursery Area have removed their nets due to the closure of the area. These fishermen have concentrated their efforts on working the shore along the north wall at Heysham.

During this last quarter I have observed little activity from anglers setting lines.

DINGHY AND SHORE ANGLING

Throughout this last quarter effort from dinghy anglers has remained low key. I have checked and had reported poor landings of all species fish with fishermen still having problems with the number of Dog fish being landed.

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 and Knott End. As with the dinghy anglers fishermen have been disappointed with poor landings of little or no fish.

During this last quarter the Heysham Bass Nursery Area was closed to all aspects of fishing. I have received only occasional reports of activity although generally fishermen have responded positively to the closure. This area continues to be patrolled on a regular basis and will continue to be observed in the future.

CENTRAL AREA

RIVER WYRE TO RIVER ALT

Senior IFCO, S. Brown

GENERAL

After what turned out to be a very cold and relatively dry spring the weather improved considerably with a prolonged hot period and thundery downpours in July. Needless to say this unusual combination of weather conditions has reflected in the fishing patterns observed.

The stationing of patrol vessel 'Protector Gamma' at Barrow has for the first time in many years given us the opportunity to patrol the emerging Morecambe Bay fisheries properly. In her short time on station this vessel has already proved to be most useful in policing the Bass fishery and the Ribble cockle fishery.

TRAWLING

There has been very little trawling activity from Fleetwood, one inshore trawler was laid up temporarily when the skipper broke his wrist in a cycling accident. Prior to this he did manage a few trips and reports were received of modest plaice catches from below Shell Wharf.

The ports last home based larger trawler FD160 'Colinne' is back in service after a prolonged period laid up due to the skippers general ill health and repairs.

It is sad to reflect that as a direct result of the high investment necessary, high running costs and reduces fishing opportunity that the once prosperous Fleetwood inshore trawling sector is in terminal decline.

SHRIMPING

This year's spring shrimp fishery has not been particularly successful.

Significant sand build up particularly in the Penfold Channel and off Southport has considerably reduced available fishing grounds for the Southport and Marshside shrimp fishermen. This combined with the erratic and generally unfavourable weather conditions have combined to make this spring fishery a particularly poor one.

Conditions have been slightly more favourable for the remaining Lytham shrimp fishermen. Their problem has been the increasing difficulty in getting shrimps picked. One man has persisted making some respectable landings until the middle of July when catches began to fall away. The other Lytham fishermen have only fished for shrimp at opportune times preferring to concentrate their efforts on alternative fisheries.

Serious commercial use of push nets is in terminal decline however their ranks have been replaced by a considerable number of enthusiastic domestic harvesters who have become aware of the gastronomic bounty a little enterprise can provide.

Push netters have been observed along the coast from Blackpool to Rossall Pt, catches have been sufficient for domestic needs.

COCKLES/MUSSELS

There has been a respectable mussel spatfall on King Scar, Black Scar and Perch Scar, mussel spat has been noticeably absent on the Rossall Scar and the Neckings.

Low scale harvesting of size mussel from the Ribble Walls continues. One fisherman's punt has been lost while working this fishery. The local practice of placing the catch in a small boat under tow prevented any risk to the fishermen themselves. Apparently the deeply laden punt was swamped by a following sea when it grounded on a sand bar.

The opening of the Foulnaze cockle fishery in late July passed without major incident. The cockles that remain are of excellent size but are scattered over a large area. About 100 cockle gatherers turned up each day, the high price being offered for these large cockles compensating for the low catches taken.

Cockle stocks elsewhere are extremely disappointing with no sign of a significant spatfall on any of the major beds.

NETTING

Drift netters from Fleetwood and Lytham have successfully pursued the Bass fishery throughout the quarter.

It is always a pleasure to report the arrival of a new vessel to the fishery. Veteran inshore skipper Brian Bond has taken delivery of a new "fast cat" FD7 'Bond Girls', and has fished her with considerable success concentrating on the Morecambe Bay fishery.

The Lytham drift netters have fished regularly and respectable landings have been made.

There has been some beach netting activity along the Penfold Channel and at Southport, one full time nets man remains fishing Tailors Bank off Formby. Modest catches of Bass and Sole have been taken.

ANGLING

The good weather in June and July was excellent for the beached launched boat angling community. Considerable numbers of small boats have been launch from beach accesses at Cleveleys, Blackpool and Ainsdale. Catches of Bass have been taken from off the Ribble and southern Morecambe Bay. An abundance of dogfish have been reported off the Fylde Coast.

Shore angling has been popular at both high and low water marks. Catches have not been as good, this is not surprising given the prevailing calm weather and light offshore winds.

Anglers have been seen fishing for flounder from the Bullnose at Preston, the Ribble Walls and in increasing numbers during stronger onshore winds along the R Wyre at Stannah.

ENFORCEMENT

Regular patrols have been undertaken afloat, ashore and on intertidal areas. Increasing numbers of opportunistic Oriental shell fish gatherers and nets men visiting our shores from inland towns have proved troublesome having no knowledge of fisheries or conservation legislation. Communication is often difficult as few seem to be proficient in the English language.

Improved co-operation with the EA and 'Protector Gamma' coming on stream has greatly improved afloat capabilities. I have assisted with 14 boat patrols this quarter.

32 ATV patrols have been undertaken covering 555.2 nautical miles on patrol and sample gathering work.

Ashore and on intertidal areas I have carried out 129 inspections, detected 32 mostly minor infringements and issued 23 verbal admonishments. In addition I have worked with other officers with permit checking and policing of the Foulhaze cockle fishery and assisted in other areas on several occasions.

SOUTHERN AREA

MERSEY, WIRRAL AND DEE

IFCO, A. Brownrigg

GENERAL

During this quarter my daily routine activities such as enforcement, sampling and survey work have continued throughout my area and the NWIFCA district.

SPECIFIC

COCKLING

Assistance in the collection of samples from the Ribble Cockle beds for West Lancashire Borough Council and Mersey Port Health Authority (MPHA) will continue throughout the forthcoming months. In the meantime, Wirral North cockle bed remains closed, and will continue to do so during the rest of 2013 in order to allow the bed to settle.

MUSSEL

During May an inspection of West Kirby mussel bed was undertaken and found no mussel spat present. Only two to three year old mussel was observed, and a rough estimate shows around 300 to 400 ton dispersed over a patchy bed. Low level mussel harvesting has been observed taking place on the bed for commercial use, to date approximately fifteen tons has been taken for relaying in Jersey with a smaller quantity sent for the local market. Mussel inspections on behalf of Cefas remain on going.

RAZOR CLAM

From May to October, it is not uncommon to see in the region of 30 to 100 Oriental gatherers harvesting Razor Clam off Leasowe/Moreton beach. This activity normally takes place over a three day period particularly during spring tides. Although thought to be mainly for personal consumption, several observations suggest that some are being sold commercially. Upon inspection I have observed individuals gathering up to 10kg of Razor Clams, however, there are no regulations in place for the gathering of Razor Clam and I anticipate gathering will continue until October when the weather, temperature and time change.

SHORE ANGLING

Recreational Angling continues to take place throughout the area. The North Wirral Coastline, Otterspool Promenade and New Brighton (Perch Rock and Kings Parade) again are proving to be very popular areas. Routine patrols continue to observe areas at Crosby Promenade, the River Alt, the 'Wall' in the Port of Liverpool and Albert and Kings Dock, again all these areas have had very little or no activity observed during this last quarter. Patrols have also taken place at Fiddlers Ferry in Warrington and Oglet Banks which is situated behind John Lennon Airport, to date no angling has been observed.

BOAT ANGLING

Daily sightings observe registered and unregistered fishing vessels continuing to fish in the River Mersey and Liverpool Bay areas. Weekends or times of competitions remain to be the most popular times for boat angling. When the replacement vessel comes to fruition, I will be able to gather a more accurate account to what is being caught.

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.

NETS

Presently, there are four set nets in the area off Leasowe Common. All nets identified are owned by one local fisherman all of which are correctly marked in accordance with NWIFCA byelaws.

COMMERCIAL BOAT ANGLING

Commercial fishing boats, known to be from Liverpool Marina, can often be observed moored off New Brighton and Liverpool Bay. Each craft can transport between eight to ten anglers, however, no significant catches have been noted up to this date. Good relationships remain on going and advice and guidance is routinely provided, along with inspection of fishing gear and equipment when requested continues.

ENFORCEMENT

This quarter has seen the opening of the Foulnaze cockle bed as a boat fishery. IFC Officer Capper, and myself have been based at Haul Road, Southport to prevent access to Foulnaze cockle bed by ATV or by any other means. During the first week of opening it is pleasing to note that no enforcement issues have arisen, this task will remain on going during August.

Two verbal warnings were issued to two oriental netmen in breach of Byelaw 19 for catching undersize fish (Plaice, Flounder, Dab Soul and Thornback). Since the warnings were issued both nets men have been re inspected and have found to be conforming to the byelaw.

REPLACEMENT VESSEL

A second and more detailed quote has been received from Humber boats in recent weeks, it is anticipated that an order for a codeable 7.5 metre Rigid Inflatable Boat for the southern part of the district will be placed very soon.

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 and survey work. Quarterly meetings with Sefton Beach Management Forum have taken place, as have meetings with Dee Cockle Liaison and the Agriculture, Fisheries & Rural Strategy. Finally, assistance to the GLA, MPHA, NRW and Merseyside Police has remained on going, and will continue to do so.