

# **North Western IFCA Quarterly Meeting**

**28 September 2012: 11.00 a.m.**

**AGENDA  
ITEM NO.  
7**

## **ENFORCEMENT DIRECTOR'S REPORT ON THE FISHERIES FOR THE PERIOD 1<sup>ST</sup> May 2012 to 31<sup>ST</sup> July 2012**

Members of the Authority will now be aware that the purpose of this report is to provide a brief overview of the fisheries within the district, fishing activity, enforcement and any other topics relevant to the inshore fishing industry and the work of the NW IFCA.

Owing to intense pressure of work, principally associated with the Ribble cockle fishery, I have to apologise for what will be a somewhat truncated report. However, as usual more detailed information on fishing is contained in the area officer's individual reports and also the report of the Master of the patrol vessel "Solway Protector".

Long spells of what can only be described as unseasonal weather curtailed offshore fishing activity far more than would normally be expected at this time of the year. This will have almost certainly contributed to area officer's reporting some poor returns, particularly from whitefish and prawn trawling operations throughout the district.

Creel fishermen experienced no better than average fishing for lobster and brown crab, particularly from the grounds between south of Barrow to the Solway. Catches of brown shrimp from all the recognised fishing areas are understood to have been abysmal. Many fishermen are blaming this on the lengthy periods of heavy rainfall experienced this "summer" which they say has adversely affected the salinity of sea water in the shallow areas where shrimps are usually found.

The Authority's offshore enforcement capability is now back to somewhere near full strength, following the installation of a new port engine in the "Solway Protector". Details of the vessel can be found in the Master's quarterly report. Despite poor weather affecting offshore fishing, enforcement officers have been kept busy during the quarter, this exacerbated by covering for annual leave and planning for the opening of the Ribble cockle fishery. The fishery was opened under the terms of byelaw 14(b) on the 1<sup>st</sup> August, and although outside the reporting period, I can inform Members that from my perspective the enforcement operation proved to be effective and successful.

Management and enforcement of the fishery was as expected, extremely demanding requiring officers from all around the district to work for lengthy periods both day and night.

Enforcement staff also had to carry out normal, routine duties attending to the management of fisheries within their respective areas. I would like to take this opportunity of conveying my personal thanks and appreciation to all the enforcement, administration and scientific staff for all their efforts and hard work, without which the Ribble cockle fishery would not have taken place.

**D. T. DOBSON  
Enforcement Director  
3 September 2012**

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

**“SOLWAY PROTECTOR”**

Following replacement of the port engine, I am pleased to report that the “Solway Protector” has provided us with almost three months of trouble free service. We did however undertake a number of minor repairs which are as follows:

- Renewal of faulty wiring harness on the automatic bilge pump system.
- Repair to circuit board on main gas alarm system.
- Renewal of wandering lead electrical deck socket for the anchor windlass.
- Repair and overhaul the 40hp mercury outboard engine on “Solway Protector’s” five metre RIB, along with replacing the helm and cabling assembly.
- Replaced faulty alternator on port main engine.
- Replace and rewire faulty heat and smoke detectors in engine room.
- Repair and overhaul main 6.5kw electrical generator set.
- Renewal of leaking fuel lines to Webasto heating system.
- Replace starboard main engine raw water supply pipe which was found to be leaking an excessive amount of water due to corrosion. The pipe had fractured between the raw water pump and the heat exchanger. “Solway Protector” was offline for several days while a new pipe was fabricated by McGrady Engineering.

All of the above repairs were carried out by the patrol boat engineer with the Authority’s officers assisting.

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

**SEVEN METRE RIB - “PROTECTOR BRAVO”**

“Protector Bravo” was taken out of service at the beginning of July; again we had encountered problems with the inflatable tubes leaking air. This had become particularly worrying as all five sections of the sponsons were losing air at the same time, indicating that the rubber bulkheads inside the tubes had failed.

“Protector Bravo” is now in her 13th year of operation and due the nature of work carried out when alongside fishing vessels on routine boarding’s and inspections, lifting lobster pots, hauling nets, and other daily tasks, has resulted in a considerable amount of wear and tear. Arrangements were made for “Protector Bravo” to be transported by road trailer to the Wigan based company Northwest RIBs, where a detailed inspection was been carried out and necessary repairs undertaken. A quotation to have the boat completely re-tubed has been received from Northwest RIBs.

## **BOARDINGS, PATROLS AND INSPECTIONS**

Periods of poor weather, along with repairs and the patrol boat crew being tasked on shore duties has resulted in quite a lot of patrol days at sea being lost.

A total of 29 patrols were carried out in the district using both "Solway Protector" and "Protector Bravo".

Sightings of fishing vessels made from "Solway Protector" totalled 239, with 20 being logged as visiting vessels, a total of 37 boardings and inspections were carried out at sea by both 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 at sea has on the whole been good.

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

## **SURVEYS**

We hope to carry out a stock assessment survey of a subtidal mussel bed in the upper Solway during September. This will be done as usual over a couple of days using our own mussel sample dredge towed from the stern of the "Solway Protector".

Planning is also underway to undertake a day grab sampling programme following reports from local Shellfishermen that cockles are evident in a subtidal area to the northwest of Silloth.

**Master "Solway Protector"**  
**15<sup>th</sup> August 2012**

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

Date	Area Patrolled	Sightings	Sea time	
			Hrs.	Mins.
01/05/2012	W of Sellafield/Walney/Heysham	4	9	35
02/05/2012	W of Sellafield/NW corner/Marport/St Bees	26	10	45
03/05/2012	Robin Rigg area	0	12	30
09/05/2012	St Bees Head/Prawn Pitch/Duddon/Selker	7	6	20
28/05/2012	St Bees head/Selker/Sellafield	6	4	45
29/05/2012	Saltom Bay/Walney/Heysham/Drigg	8	10	0
31/05/2012	St Bees/Sellafield	1	3	15
11/06/2012	Prawn Pitch	9	10	25
12/06/2012	St Bees/Walney/Lune Deep/Selker	14	8	30
13/06/2012	Prawn Pitch/Selker/Barrow/Ribble/Dee	15	11	30
14/06/2012	Liverpool Bay/Heysham/Prawn Pitch	4	9	30
18/06/2012	Prawn Pitch/Maryport/Workington	10	4	30
19/06/2012	W of Whitehaven/Prawn Pitch	15	3	0
20/06/2012	Overnight patrol/Prawn Pitch/Plaice Box/Maryport	19	11	50
26/06/2012	St Bees/Ravenglass/Walney	13	8	0
27/06/2012	Prawn Pitch/Ravenglass/St Bees	6	7	40
06/07/2012	W of Whitehaven/Selker/Workington	18	11	30
10/07/2012	W of Whitehaven/Prawn Pitch/ Walney/Heysham	16	9	30
25/07/2012	St Bees Head/Selker/Whitehaven	9	3	50
26/07/2012	St Bees Head/Heysham/Whitehaven	30	10	20
31/07/2012	St Bees Head/Prawn Pitch/Workington	9	4	35

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

	<b>1/5/2012 - 31/7/2012</b>		<b>1/2/2012 - 30/4/2012</b>	
Number of patrols and passages	21	patrols	2	patrols
Seatime	171 hrs	50 mins	14hrs	05 mins
Average length of patrol	8 hrs	10 mins	7 hrs	03 mins
Total distance covered	1609	miles	101	miles
Average distance per patrol	77	miles	51	miles
Fuel used	2876	gallons	263	gallons
Average fuel used per patrol	137	gallons	132	gallons
<b><u>Total identified sightings:</u></b>	239	vessels	10	vessels
Local	219	vessels	1	vessels
Visiting	20	vessels	9	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	129	22	0	4
Beam Trawlers	3	0	0	0
Twin Rig Trawlers	0	20	0	5
Pair Trawlers	0	0	0	0
Anchor Seiners	0	0	0	0
Fly Draggers	0	0	0	0
Gill Netters	3	0	0	0
Shrimpers	0	0	0	0
Twin Beam Shrimpers	1	0	0	0
Whelk Potters	12	0	0	0
Potting Boats	0	0	1	0
Scallop Dredgers	0	1	0	0
Mussel Dredgers	0	0	0	0
Cockle Dredgers	0	0	0	0
Netters	0	0	0	0
Anglers	48	0	0	0
<b><u>Total:</u></b>	196	43	1	9

## **NORTHERN (CUMBRIA)**

## **BURGHMARSH POINT - HAVERIGG POINT**

**IFCO, E. Thinnesen**

### **GENERAL**

This reporting period for the shore had seen some night time fishing by trawlers targeting prawns (nephrops). There has been a good run of mackerel off the Cumbrian coast this summer, along with a continued increase in bass being caught by both boat and shore anglers. Shrimp vessels are struggling with low prices and catch rates which are down considerably this year compared to the previous years. Heavy prolonged spells of rain have been blamed for the lack of brown shrimp in the Solway Firth.

### **TRAWLING**

Reasonable catches of nephrops were made throughout the period by local boats from both Whitehaven and Maryport, and also some visiting Irish vessels. The majority of the catches were made during the hours of darkness, with daylight fishing bearing little results.

Local boats average catches between 16 - 40 stone of prawns for a nights work. The shrimp beamers fishing from Silloth have been catching well below average amounts. Checks made by officers revealed catches of no better than 50-200kg, with prices reported poor at no better than 90p per kg for rough shrimp.

The Northern Ireland seine netter, "Arcane" N907, made a couple of landings into Whitehaven, consisting of over 300 boxes of mainly haddock (equating to approximately 18 tonnes). Some vessels from Maryport have been fishing in Wigtown Bay over in the Scottish side of the Solway where some fairly good catches were reported taken. Approximately 30 boxes of mixed skate and plaice and 40-60 stones of prawns were seen landed by these vessels, for a nights work.

### **POTTING**

Fishing for lobster and brown crab was at its peak this quarter although the weather was sometimes unfavourable to creel fishermen, most of whom work from small boats. Although the seasonal moult took place during this period, pottng skippers were still seen to be reasonably happy with what they have been catching. The whelk boat "Fleur De France" fishing from Whitehaven has been landing his usual 8-10 tonnes of whelk into the port from a two day trips to the Scottish side of the Solway.

### **OFFSHORE NETTING**

There has been the usual activity from vessels at Whitehaven and Maryport netting in the area, targeting mainly skate and turbot but with mixed returns. A larger than normal amount of tope were reported as being snared in nets off Maryport this year. They are now a protected species and fishermen will attempt to return tope alive wherever possible.

### **ANGLING**

Recreational angling in Cumbria has continued to be popular, especially through the warmer weather where good catches of mackerel have been made off Whitehaven pier and from angling vessels throughout the area. Maryport pier had a short period of good returns of both mackerel and bass during this quarter. Although the weather hasn't really been good this summer with prolonged periods of wind and rain, fishing for bass has continued to improve. There were reports of good catches of bass for a period for both shore and boat anglers alike, from Duddon bar to Selker rocks and Maryport to Beckfoot principally by boat anglers. On shore, bass have been taken from virtually every beach in

the district. Other species caught included flounder, dab, and small whiting. Lesser-spotted dogfish have continued to be caught in such numbers to be considered a nuisance to local anglers.

### **BAIT DIGGING**

There has been activity of lugworm digging identified mainly in the areas off Allonby, Ellison's Scar, Nethertown and also in Whitehaven outer harbour. The price for locally dug lugworm continues to be around £35 per 100 worms. Rag worm diggers have mostly been seen and inspected at Ellison's and Lowhagstock Scars. Large numbers of anglers were seen collecting peeler crab at the more popular areas of scar ground between Gutterby in the south and Beckfoot in the upper Solway.

### **OTHER DUTIES**

This period has seen an increase in assistance to Officers in the south of the NW IFCA district. I have also crewed the "Solway Protector" during the quarter due to cover for leave taken by regular crew members.

### **ENFORCEMENT**

Enforcement activity within Cumbria has included 6 lobsters and brown crab pots being seized and removed from the fishery for having no escape gaps fitted. An individual has been cautioned and questioned in connection with the incident, investigations are continuing. Two undersized lobsters and a berried lobster was identified and seized from a trawler landing into Whitehaven. As the skipper had only been in the fishing industry for less than two months, a written warning was deemed to be appropriate on this occasion.

### **QUARTERLY STATISTICS**

Breaches of regulations:	11
Anglers:	1,484
Bait gatherers:	89
Shore patrols:	51
Locations visited:	487
Quad patrols:	7
Locations covered by quad:	66
Routine inspections:	356
Fish and shellfish holdings inspected:	145
Vessels seen working off shore by officers:	121
Assistance to officers in other locations:	5

### **NORTH MORECAMBE BAY**

### **HAVERIGG POINT TO ARNSIDE**

**IFCO, I. DIXON**

### **TRAWLING**

Throughout the last quarter I have observed no trawling activity taking place on a commercial basis, the trawlers moored in Barrow docks have been undergoing maintenance works or are unoperational, one trawler 'Natalie Rose' was in Barrow for maintenance works and then left for Whitehaven without fishing from Barrow. There are 4 small trawlers at moorings in Walney channel but I have only observed one of these fishing on a non-commercial basis in the Foulney area.

## **SHRIMPING**

I have observed shrimp fishing activity by tractors and tra-la-la units operating mainly from Flookburgh during the quarter when conditions were favourable, however catches were moderate at best. Two fishermen from Flookburgh favoured the Leven channel area, along with the one remaining shrimp fisherman from Baycliff who was finding fishing poor due to low catches and problems accessing the fishing grounds due to changes in the channel and sands. The majority of shrimp fishermen from Flookburgh tended to favour the area known as 'Goldmine' and the Kent channel area south of Jenny Brown's Point, results here tended to be better than in the Leven channel. Two fishermen were given warnings relating to Byelaw 6 offences, being not riddling the catch as soon as possible and using a motorised riddle mounted on a trailer which was situated on the sand off the access track at west plain, several miles from the fishing grounds.

## **COCKLES**

During the last quarter I have not observed any cockling activity and I have not received any reports concerning cockling on my area. I have been asked by several members of the public if they can take up to 5kg of cockles for their own consumption from Morecambe Bay/Duddon/Walney Channel but I have told them that the beds remain closed to all cockling.

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

I conducted a survey into cockle stocks in the Flookburgh and Leven Island area with the IFCA's Science officers.

## **MUSSELS**

During the last quarter I have observed very little commercial mussel fishing activity in the area, the only activity was small scale harvesting of mussel in the walney channel by a licensed vessel. I have received reports of unauthorised removal of seed mussel from the Foulney mussel bed in early June by commercial fishermen in the Furness area to be sold on for relaying.

I have seen several individuals taking less than 5kg a day on a few occasions in the Roa Island and Hodbarrow area.

I continue to take mussel samples from Foulney on a monthly basis for Barrow Council.

I conducted a survey of the Foulney mussel beds with IFCA Science Officers.

## **NETTING**

Very few beach nets have been observed and checked over the last quarter, 4 nets have been checked in the Leven estuary between Chapel Island and Cowpren point, which were correctly marked, the main catch was flounders with a few Bass and Mullet caught. The nets were taken in for a period when conditions were unfavourable. One beach net was checked in the Duddon estuary near Askam pier, belonging to a hobby fisherman, this was correctly marked by the permit holder, the catch I inspected after the first time of fishing consisted of 174 Flounders, 1 Bass and 1 Mullet, the undersize flounders were returned and only the largest dozen flounders were kept for the table.

No other beach nets have been seen in my area.

Netting from boats has seen an increase in effort since the start of July, with one licensed vessel seen on a regular basis in the last week of July leaving Walney slipway and netting for Bass in the Mort

Bank area. 4 unlicensed boats have been observed leaving Walney slipway and netting for Bass in the South Walney and Foulney area, catch reports suggest a good number of school Bass are present but reports from one net fisherman said that a lot of the Bass are 34/35cm in length and are returned. Several boats have reported netting near the Duddon bar, with one haul of 24 stone of Bass reported. Inspections carried out as boats left the slipway found everything to be in compliance with IFCA byelaws regarding net size, marking of gear and correct permits for estuary areas.

### **POTTING**

The only potting activity I have observed is from a licensed vessel which operates from Ravenglass and has some strings of pots set off the west coast of Walney.

Whelk potting by a licensed vessel from Barrow has continued in the outer Walney channel area, however this has not been on a regular basis due to problems obtaining crab bait due to prices being high.

### **ANGLING**

Anglers were observed in significant numbers around the Furness coast, with the west coast of Walney, Roosebeck and Ulverston being popular, catches consisted mainly of flounders, but a good showing of Bass during July lead to reports of up to 15 Bass being caught in one session, mostly undersize of 34/35cm which were returned, however some specimens of up to 10lb were reported.

Several warnings were issued to anglers in the Ulverston area for undersize flounder offences.

Boat anglers have been seen in large numbers during late June/July launching from Walney and fishing the south Walney/Morecambe bay/west coast Walney area, with catches of Bass, cod, and a promising number of sole recorded. Inspections recorded good compliance with minimum landing size of Bass, although one regular angler was warned about undersize Bass and shown the correct way to measure them.

Several long lines have been checked in the Roosebeck/Newbiggin area, although these were not being fished regularly.

### **GENERAL**

During this quarter I have attended meetings with the Duddon Estuary Partnership and Barrow Councils Wildlife and Heritage Committee, I have worked with IFCA officers in the areas which border mine and have shared information with Environment Agency and MMO Officers.

I have attended a 5 day Investigative Law training course with other IFCA/MMO officers.

### **NORTHERN AREA**

### **ARNSIDE TO KNOTT END**

**Senior IFCO, S. J. Waite**

### **TRAWLING**

Throughout this last quarter I have observed no trawling activity taking place either on a commercial or hobby basis. This fishery continues to prove very disappointing and I expect no improvement in the foreseeable future.

## **SHRIMPS**

The poor landings reported in my last report have, unfortunately, continued throughout this last quarter. Fishermen have blamed this on the amount of fresh water in Morecambe Bay as a result of the record amounts of rainfall experienced. Fishermen associated with the inshore shrimp fishery have been further compounded by long periods of strong winds. This has resulted in fishermen having to concentrate their effort to working the more sheltered areas on the South side of Morecambe Bay.

Throughout this last quarter I have observed no activity from inshore shrimp fishermen working on a hobby basis. Similarly, I have observed no effort from fishermen working tractor and tra la la units. During the first half of this last quarter I checked and observed only limited activity from hobby fishermen using push nets. Throughout the second period effort fell and I observed no further activity in the push net fishery.

## **COCKLES**

Throughout this last quarter I have checked all recognised cockle beds on a regular basis. During this last quarter I received a report of Chinese gatherers removing cockles from the shore opposite Green Street slipway. I subsequently checked the area and found one Chinese lady with around 15 cockles. I informed her that all cockle beds were closed and she returned the shellfish to the sea. In this same quarter I discovered another Chinese lady who had gathered 2 cockles. She also returned these to the sea.

Environmental Health Officers have recently received a similar complaint following which they carried out inspections of all Chinese restaurants in the area. We have agreed to liaise on all shellfish matters in the future.

I have observed 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 mussel gathering taking place on the south side of Morecambe Bay. Throughout this last period I have checked all skears in my area. Unfortunately the early promise of seed mussel on Heysham Flat has proved very disappointing with most of the area down to bedrock. Most other areas have shown better signs of seed mussels with the Wyre End Skear showing the most promise with a good covering of seed mussel both on the skear itself and also to the east of the skear.

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 return of the inshore drift net fishery, although effort has proved low key. Those inshore bass fishermen that ventured out have, however, been rewarded with some good landings of Bass.

During this last quarter I have continued to observe and check both stake and set net areas. This fishery continues to prove extremely low key. Effort has been limited to a few nets working towards the top of Morecambe Bay, with occasional nets being set in the Heysham Area. Fishermen working this area have reported reasonable landings of mainly flat fish and Bass with very few Mullet being caught.

## **DINGHY AND SHORE ANGLING**

During this last quarter effort improved from dinghy anglers when weather permitted. Fish species targeted mainly being Plaice and Bass with some good fish being checked and reported. Although landings have proved good, fishermen have reported large numbers of dog fish being caught throughout the 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 Arnside. Species caught being mainly Bass, Plaice, Dabs, Flounder, and Dogfish. I have checked the Heysham Bass Nursery Area individually and also with other officers and have observed and checked both fishermen and landings. I intend to continue to check this area on a regular basis.

## **CENTRAL AREA**

## **RIVER WYRE TO RIVER ALT**

**Senior IFCO, S. Brown**

### **GENERAL**

Erratic and unseasonal weather has severely hindered fishing operations throughout this reporting period. Most coastal fishermen are eagerly awaiting the opening of the Ribble cockle fishery, many have not made a realistic wage since the fishery closed in November. All was set for an opening in mid-July until an unforeseen poor molluscan shellfish hygiene sample delayed the opening date. A very significant proportion of my time has been involved in the preparations for the opening of the Ribble cockle fishery.

### **TRAWLING**

The unpredictable weather and very large amounts of fresh water entering the coastal zone have not been helpful for the areas remaining trawlers.

One inshore trawler has worked predominantly below Shell Wharf along the edge of the bank making some modest landings primarily of plaice and flounder.

Inshore beam trawler Emily J has worked over a significant area from Lancaster Sound down to the Wirral coast. Respectable landings of plaice and sole were made from the Lune Deep fishery. It is also most encouraging to report for the first time in a long while decent landings from the Blackpool and Gut fisheries consisting of sole plaice and some thornback ray. These fisheries deteriorated rapidly in effect going to seed when significant fishing capacity was lost from the area. It is to be hoped that this small but powerful vessel has the capacity to harvest these fisheries sufficiently to stimulate further recovery.

The area's one remaining larger prawn trawler has been laid up for a prolonged period for survey and maintenance work. It is reported that she will be shortly ready to return to sea.

### **SHRIMPING**

We have had a very poor spring shrimp fishery; first a succession of offshore winds (always bad for the shrimp fishery) and then torrential rain flushing out the rivers.

One boat from Lytham struggled on until late June, most of the Southport and Marshside fishermen were laid up by the middle of June; it simply wasn't economical to operate.

The occasional push netter has tried their hand along the Fylde Coast but catches have been extremely disappointing.

### **COCKLES/MUSSELS/QUEEN SCALLOPS**

One boat has fished for Queen scallops from Fleetwood. She has made a few respectable landings but has been plagued by winch and crew troubles. At the time of writing she is under repair in Birkenhead.

The vagaries of the weather have not encouraged the early mussel spatfall previously reported on the North Fylde beds. At present the mussel spat that remains is somewhat patchy and not looking very prosperous.

On a positive note I am glad to report that the small scale exploitation of the Ribble Wall mussel beds by a local fisherman who has set up his own purification plant continues. Such enterprise is to be lauded being both beneficial to the local economy and to the local environment.

The Foulnaze cockle bed has been surveyed and the remaining size cockles have grown on and regrouped nicely. There has been a general late cockle spatfall on all beds about the Ribble. It will be some months before it is possible to speculate if this spatfall will take. The opening of the Foulnaze fishery is eagerly awaited by the fishing community.

There are substantial stocks of rather poor cockle on the Penfold North bed and modest stocks on Penfold South. Penfold West did not over winter well and little stock remains on the once substantial area. Very few shellfish remain on the St. Annes beds.

### **NETTING/POTS**

After a slow start the drift net fishery off the Ribble got well under way in July. The Lytham nets-men have made respectable landings of an admittedly small run of Bass throughout the month. Two of these boats have however been badly hit by the new requirement to re-register their vessels as part of the regional quota issue. As a result they will have their licences capped for pressure stock species. While their uptake of pressure stock species is small this will certainly have an adverse effect on their ability to make a living as well as the value of their investment in the fishery.

Two Lytham fishermen (father and son) had a very lucky escape when returning from the drift net fishery on 23 July. Their vessel took a sea over the quarter when crossing the Ribble bar, broached too and was hit by a second sea that capsized her. They managed to hold onto the upturned boat. Vessel and crew were recovered by the local RNLI. It must be stressed that this was a properly built well found boat of proven design fitted with internal buoyancy. The crew was experienced and the boat properly equipped. The above incident serves as a warning to us all how even the most professional of fishermen face potential tragedy on what should have been a routine day's work.

The Fleetwood netting boats have not fared quite as well but respectable landings have been observed. Some boats have found that they have been better off concentrating on line fishing for Bass there not being as much scope for drift netting off the North Fylde coast.

Along the beaches netting has not been as successful. Apart from Tailor's Bank where one man has been netting and potting most gear was brought ashore by early June. A lot of debris has been brought down the rivers by the heavy rainfall and the fresh water has kept the fish offshore discouraging intertidal netting activity.

## **ANGLING**

The sport of angling remains as popular as ever but the offshore winds and wet weather that have prevailed this quarter have ruined any prospect of decent catches from the shore. During the brief periods of decent conditions significant numbers of anglers have been seen at high water marks along the Fylde Coast. Landings have consisted primarily of smallish Bass.

Shore anglers have also been seen along the Ribble walls and at the "Bullnose" Preston fishing for Flounder.

Boat anglers have been marginally more successful. Beach launched boats have been observed off Gut, Salters, along the Fylde coast North of Blackpool at King Scar and Heysham No 2. Catches observed have been of a slightly better run of Bass.

## **ENFORCEMENT AND OTHER ACTIVITIES**

I was fortunate in being selected along with the master of the patrol vessel H. Thinnesen to attend the Royal Navy Marine Enforcement Officers Course run by MMO and the RN. This very intensive 3 week course covered National and EU legislation in the coastal and offshore field. I am glad to report that both of us were successful in completing this most prestigious course. Many of the subjects covered on this training course have already proved to be very useful.

A great deal of effort has been put in to maintain the closure of the Foulnaze cockle bed. Intensive patrolling both high profile and at obscure times has helped ensure the maintenance of the closure.

In addition regular patrols of the area both ashore and intertidal have been undertaken. The ATV has covered 136.6nm on patrol and sample gathering work. 22 inspections ashore have resulted in 6 minor offences being detected and 5 verbal admonishments being issued.

## **SOUTHERN AREA**

## **MERSEY, WIRRAL AND DEE**

**IFCO, A. Brownrigg**

## **GENERAL**

The Sea Angling 2012 survey and the continuation of building up a picture of fishing activity within my area has been my primary task for this quarter; along with daily tasks of enforcement, sampling and survey work. Protector Alpha, the area's 5 metre Rigid Inflatable Boat, is now out of repair and undertaking waterborne patrols within the area. Assistance to scientific staff and other enforcement officers within the district remains ongoing.

## **TRAWLING**

A small part-time fishing unit of around seven boats can be found moored off Meols, and observations indicate that most vessels have shown very little activity during the last quarter. Several trawlers working on the Dee Estuary regularly operate on the six mile point fishing for Soul.

## **SPECIFIC**

## **COCKLING**

The cockle bed within the area is now closed and will remain closed during the 2012 cockling season in order to allow the bed to settle. MSH Hygiene and Bio Toxin samples remain to be routinely

undertaken to determine the quality of the bed. Presently, only adult size shell fish remain from 2010's spat.

### **RAZOR CLAM**

Twenty to thirty Oriental gatherers have been observed harvesting Razor Clam on Leasowe/Moreton beach during particularly low tides. Although thought to be mainly for personal consumption, several observations suggest that some are being sold commercially. Upon inspection I have observed up to 120 Razor Clams being fished from one gatherer alone, however, there are no regulations in place for Razor Clam fishing.

### **ANGLING**

Despite the poor weather, which has led to long periods without any fishing, I have noted a steady rise in angling from the shore and from small crafts.

### **SHORE ANGLING**

Seaforth, Otterspool and New Brighton (Perch Rock, Kings Parade) are all popular areas for Bass, Dab, Codling, Whiting and Ray to be fished. Mackerel, Bass and Flounder are presently being fished from Gunsite and from the foreshore of Leasowe Common. The number of Rod Anglers noted in the area has increased somewhat since my last report. At this time, it is not uncommon to see fifteen to twenty anglers fishing daily along areas of the north Wirral coastline.

### **COMMERCIAL BOAT ANGLING**

Six to eight 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 ten to twelve anglers, however, no significant catches have been noted up to this date. A good relationship has developed with the skippers, and advice and guidance is routinely provided, along with inspection of fishing gear and equipment.

### **NETS**

Presently, there are five set nets in the area of East Hoyle Bank. All nets identified are owned by one local fisherman all of which are correctly marked in accordance with Byelaw 11.

### **PRIVATE FISHING VESSELS**

Reports suggest there can be anything between 150 – 200 private fishing vessels working in the area. At the weekends, it is not uncommon to spot up to 50 boats a day within my area. Establishing contact with the several small boats and Sea Angling clubs will be a priority task for the next quarter.

### **BAIT DIGGERS**

Bait diggers, roughly two to six 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 areas.

### **SEA ANGLING 2012 SURVEY**

Six surveys have been completed within my area, which involved private and chartered vessels (from the Dee Estuary and Liverpool Marina), along with individual anglers. While undertaking the survey, we have noted numbers ranging from fifteen anglers fishing to none at all. The distribution of fliers

regarding the Sea Angling Survey 2012 throughout the angling community, has led to a slight rise in the awareness of the survey. Overall most anglers are happy to answer the survey.

### **ENFORCEMENT AND 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. Protector Alpha has been active in undertaking closings on several craft in the area; however a few scheduled patrols had to be cancelled due to inclement weather. In June, I travelled to Blackpool to attend a 5 day Law Enforcement Course run by the Marine Management Organisation. A one day Marine Awareness Day was held in Liverpool City Centre which gave me the opportunity to engage with the general public and other agencies about the role of IFCA within the district, and in particular, the southern area. During May I was required to attend court on behalf of the Gangmasters Licensing Authority (GLA) for a Gangmaster related offence. Finally, assistance to the GLA, Mersey Port Health Authority, Wales Environment Agency and Merseyside Police has remained ongoing, and will continue to do so.